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ALL-STORY

COMBINED WITH MUNSEY

Love Stories of the American Gir

Sept. 6

20¢ Canada 25¢

On Sale Every Other Wednesday

Love or a Throne

by

"JILTED"

by Eleanor

Seven other beautiful throbbing love stories by Ethel Donoher, Agnes

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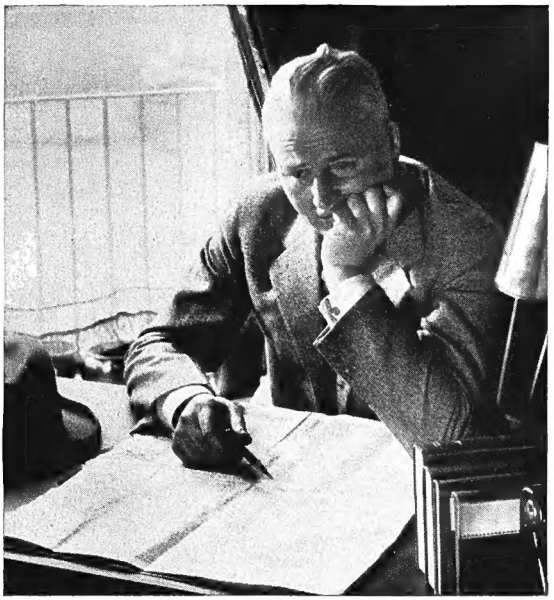

A man *past* 40

BECAUSE of his position, the man "higher up" may have halitosis (unpleasant breath) and get away with it. But with the employee whose shoes are easy to fill it's a different story. Records show that halitosis is excuse enough for letting a man go—especially if his work puts him in contact with others whom he may offend.

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LISTERINE *ends* halitosis

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?!?
COUPON Brings You Full Details

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—As a result of this purchase we will sell $2.00 Shirt Values at 99c Each!

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ALL-STORY

Combined with MUNSEY

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She came up here to forget her employer's unkindness, to think—to dream—

Love or a Throne

She dreamed of a prince, yes—but not of a ruler whose crown denied him liberty; of love, yes—but not of resignation and bitter yearning . . .

By Lois Thompson

IT was quite warm in the courtyard, though the glitter of snow on the mountains gave Martha a delightful chilliness up and down her spine. She had seen less than a half dozen snows in all her twenty-three years before coming to Alva, and those were the thin white films that melted with the first hot beams of Texas sun. These Alvanian Mountains were whitecapped the year round.

A cool little breeze touched her flushed cheeks, a little breeze straight from the snow, and she lifted her face to meet it. Cool! Clean and sweet.

Her employer had been particularly difficult this morning; particularly ugly; particularly insulting. Martha

knew she would urge an atoning gift upon her this afternoon; knew that Henrietta's gruff voice would be softened and very gentle this evening—but this afternoon and evening weren't now.

Well, Henrietta had her troubles, her disappointments. The morning's mail had been full of them. Rejections. Excuses. Denials. And Henrietta had hoped for so much from this Alvanian trip! To lease a castle, to send out carefully careless invitations to Europe-bound Texans: "Drop by to see us, won't you?" and, "Run down to see us when you're in Paris. Alva's only a step away, you know!"

And then to have every single invitation turned down. It was a blow. No wonder Henrietta Penney, oil millionairess, ex-telephone operator, ex-waitress, found it a bitter dose to swallow; and had lashed out her temper upon the handiest person—Martha Drew, her secretary.

"Not one of 'em coming!" It was a sort of a wail. "This beats me, Martha. Those Fort Worth Quinns, they said they'd come, didn't they? And Helen Hawkins—"

"But they ran into Judge and Mrs. Winbourne, and, naturally—"

"Naturally stood me up." Mrs. Penney finished caustically. "Ditched me for old Joe Winbourne, who was out at elbows long after Ed Penney was a millionaire."

Martha said nothing, not caring to mention that Judge Winbourne was also a cultured gentleman long before Ed Penney struck oil. She couldn't quarrel with her bread and butter; not when she was Heaven-knew-how-many miles from home. So Martha said nothing.

"None of 'em coming!" wailed Henrietta. She stared at Martha out of narrowed eyes. "The biggest disappointment is on account of Helen Hawkins. I had picked her for Claude. A perfect match, Helen and Claude—and now I suppose I'll have to sit here and watch *you* trying to catch him!"

"Catch Claude!" The furious color that dyed the girl's cheeks would not fade out all day. "What would I do with him? I don't want him."

Mrs. Penney laughed. And Martha walked out, her head high.

Trying to catch Claude Penney, indeed! When she nearly broke her neck trying to avoid him every day! *Trying!* "The old fool!" Tears smarted in her eyes. "I could choke her. Absolutely!"

She crossed the deep, dry moat on the drawbridge; the drawbridge that had not been drawn for a half century, and went down the hill toward the village.

The castle stood high on a wooded hillside, backed by great forests of pine and beech. The village nestled at the foot of the park, a huddle of dilapidated shops and cottages. Martha always sensed the unfriendliness of the townspeople toward the castle's tenants; even when they were bowing their lowest, she seemed to feel their bristling antagonism. "The castle—home of the hereditary princes of Alva—*the Castle* is leased to these silly rich Americans!"

Well, she could understand their resentment a little, unreasonable as it was. Their allegiance had wavered and gone down; they had set up a republic with a shoemaker for its head; they had won the liberty to fight and rant against monarchies; they were free to starve and bleed for a cause. But it was confusing to have nobody to fight. Their monarch had stepped

down and out all too cheerfully. He had made a shrewd deal with Mrs. Penney's lawyer for the renting of his castle; he had gone to the Riviera to seek the company of other throneless princes, leaving his erstwhile subjects to settle their disputes alone. Free men, Republicans—but hungry.

ALL this Martha had heard in the offices of Ewing, Hayes & Ewing, whither she had accompanied Mrs. Penney to sign the lease for Alva's historic castle.

And it was entirely true. The old woman in the Sweet Shop at the foot of the hill had given grumbling assent when questioned; the boy who hand-pumped gasoline into Mrs. Penney's magnificent car had scowled corroboration. "R-rotter! He have desert' hees people, that Philip!"

Martha wanted to laugh in the youngster's black-browed face. He was exactly the Bolshevik type, she thought—dark and violent; he'd be a knock-out in the movies.

To-day he was a little less fierce, young Ivan; Martha suspected that he had just pocketed one of Claude Penney's extravagant tips. And, sure enough, there were the familiar light-gray suit and checkered cap that meant—Claude.

"You came to order some gas?" he asked Martha, coming forward. "I've attended to it. Funny how the old boat drinks it, isn't it? Must be the steep roads, eh?"

"Doubtless," she said coldly. She hated the sight of Claude Penney's fat face. "I didn't know we needed gasoline. I am going for a walk."

"Oh, yes? I'll go along."

"No."

He stopped in his tracks. He reddened furiously.

Martha passed him, and began to quickly climb the slope behind the Sweet Shop.

She had known Claude but slightly in the little Texas town where she had taught school for two years previous to coming abroad with Mrs. Penney. He had been a rich young bachelor, she a working woman. But Henrietta's ambition to break into Fort Worth society by way of Europe had brought them together. They were elected to be Henrietta's companions in the venture.

"You two shall help me put it over," Henrietta had said. "Working together, we're sure to win."

And now, five months later: "Trying to catch Claude!"

"I hate her," said Martha fiercely. "I just believe I'll walk out on her—the old shrew!"

She took the hill in an angry burst of speed, pausing at length for breath upon a shelflike plateau that spread itself across her path. She was panting, and her face was damp with perspiration. But she was calmer, and she knew she wasn't going to walk out on Henrietta.

Not while there was an opportunity to travel about in luxurious style, seeing the world, loafing in fine hotels and fairy tale castles; not while the only other job that offered itself was a school-teaching job in Texas. It had been a glimpse of heaven, this leisurely trip: Narrow sidewalks of Seville; Granada's grim-walled Alhambra; the hotels and cathedrals of Valencia—No, she'd not walk out on Henrietta.

She began to laugh softly.

"That's right! Take it easy!" A man swung down to her plateau from above, barring her way. "You came up that stretch at a clip! What's your hurry?"

"Mad." She was still laughing. "Just plain mad."

"Mad?" He knit his brows.

He was a big young man, with light, thick hair, sea-blue eyes, and a hint of golden mustache upon his upper lip. Just now he was showing big white teeth in a puzzled grin.

Martha guessed his confusion. "Yes, mad. Angry, you know."

"Oh, angry. Is there anything I can do to help this—madness?"

"No, it's gone. The climb cured it, I think."

He said nothing, made no move to go. They stood side by side, gazing out over the mist-filled valley.

"Lovely view from here," she said stiffly, half regretting her friendliness of a moment ago. "It's worth the climb."

"Is it not? And always different; no two days alike. Fog or haze or sunshine changes these ravines and peaks into new pictures every hour."

His name was Zeitlin; he was no chance pick-up acquaintance. No less a person than Henrietta herself had introduced him to Martha, and this was their third or fourth meeting.

Two weeks ago Henrietta had whispered, "There he is, the young man who helped Jules with the car that day we were sliding into the ravine. I told you about him." She motioned. The young man came to the side of the car. "I haven't forgotten you!" she said with would-be arch friendliness. "I've told Miss Drew a dozen times how you simply saved my life. This is my secretary, Miss Drew, Mr. Zeitlin. Martha, this young man simply—"

JUST another big, sandy-blond young fellow, reddening with embarrassment, grinning. The Albanian hills and valleys were full of such big, sandy-blonds. But this one spoke excellent English, and knew how to make a beautiful heel-clicking bow from slender hips. There was a subtle *difference*.

Two more meetings, in which he had given the heel-clicking bow, and said "Good day, Miss Drew." Nothing more, yet Martha felt extraordinarily well acquainted with him.

"You are the secretary of the lady at the castle?" he ventured presently. "That is your position?"

He studied her lithe, slender figure, so lightly poised and erect in her blue jersey frock. Her hair, under her blue felt hat, made black curves against her unrouged cheeks. Her eyes were smoke-gray. There was a vitality, an aliveness about her not to be overlooked. Red blood raced through her veins; steel muscles lay under that deceptive slenderness.

"Yes, I'm Henrietta's secretary," she answered his query. "Though why she picked on that name for my job, I can't see! Flunky, companion, maid, nurse—any of those would do as well."

"You like it—not?" He was astonished into slight incoherence. "N-not?"

"You said it. I like it *not!* Decidedly not."

She described Henrietta Penney and Henrietta Penney's little ways for him with some good-natured malice. Her rage had evaporated, leaving an exhilarating lift to her spirits. Ah, well! Henrietta was a funny old thing after all!

"Funny?" he repeated, puzzled. "You find her amusing?"

"No, no! You're exactly like the eight-year-old pupil who asked me, 'Miss Martha, do you mean *funny-ha-ha* or *funny-peculiar?*'"

He saw that, and his quick laughter rang out. Then: "You were a teacher? You!"

"Yes, I." She smiled at his astonishment. "Not a very good one, I'm afraid. Still, I held my job until I found a better one."

She sighed.

"The job. In America the job is everything, is it not? It is not proper to be idle?"

"It's not considered so in these days. Not where I come from."

She told him a little of her native State: its bigness, its cities, its plains. And of the rancho down in the southwest corner where little Martha Drew had spent her lonely childhood. "A thousand miles from nowhere," she said, huskiness and impatience in her voice. "All I ever saw besides my two great uncles were the horses and

Suddenly she was crying, but she could not have told why

cows—and Mexicans, year in and year out. Until I went up to Fort Worth to school. And when I finished school, I got a job. My uncles had died, the ranch was sold and I had to make my living. So, you see—"

Her voice drifted into silence. She shrugged.

Then it was his turn to talk. He talked eagerly, in short shy sentences, with many halts for the right phrases, many helpless gestures when words failed to come to his tongue.

"Ah, that loneliness—don't I know it? No other child had I for companion. No playmate. Just teachers, teachers. And my little timid mother. In the big old house we lived, we two. My father was *never* at home. My mother was afraid of her own shadow. She had had some terrifying experience soon after coming here, and she never got over it."

"But your father, shouldn't he have stayed with her?"

"He didn't; he wasn't the staying kind; he felt no responsibilities." A wave of the hand indicated that the responsibilities of his father were beyond his descriptive powers. "My mother had for me the wish that I become a great and good man. But she was not strong. She died when I was twenty, and I had to get along without her. My father died, too, that same year."

"And you were alone in your big house?"

"For a while; not long. The rooms, the halls, the stairs—they all reminded me of her. There were too many memories. Why, all those years I'd had to leave my door open to listen for my mother's call. Afterward, I still listened. She had a dread of the landings on the stairway, dark corners; when she went up or down she would call, 'Halloo! Are you there, my Philip?' And when I answered she would come flying down, laughing, ashamed of being a 'fraid-cat. Two years, two years and a half, I stayed there when she was gone. Then I quit. I cannot endure that big lonely house another day. I go to Paris."

"You could leave your regiment—everything?" She looked at him curiously. Was he an idler? An irresponsible, like his father? "There were no duties holding you here?"

"No, nobody needed me here. The country was in revolution. I have no job, you see. So I go. This spring I came back. It is five years; I am forgotten. In a chalet—cabin, you say?—in a mountain chalet I live alone with my mother's old coachman for servant and companion. It is the best way of living I have ever found, so far; and I am learning both sides to this revolution business. Believe me, there *are* two sides!"

"Of course there are," she agreed. "And it's a pity Alva's precious young prince couldn't learn both sides! He'd be surprised. I really hope Philip XVI turns up before we go home. I'd like to see what an abdicating ruler looks like!"

"Take a look at me then!" He drew himself up to his tallest, slimmest height. "I am Philip XVI of Alva!"

OF course it was true. He *was* Prince Philip.

With reddening cheeks and pounding heart Martha realized that her staring doubt had endured but for a moment. Then she had turned and left him standing there. Without a word of farewell, she had begun her descent to the village, and he had made no move to follow her.

Philip - Zeitlin — Philip XVI — of Alva!

Yes, it was true.

Back at the castle, she reported for duty at Mrs. Penney's desk. She read, wrote letters, lunched and talked as usual. But her thoughts were not there. Her hands were deft, her tongue unfaltering; but she had a curious feeling that only her body was ministering to the cranky old lady's needs; her spirit had taken complete leave. She seemed to move in a state of profound preoccupation; she simply was not *all there*. Her heart was out on the mountainside, lying in the dust at the feet of a sandy-blond young prince—a slender, shabby young prince who moved regally for all that.

Henrietta dismissed her at last. "That's enough for to-day. You work too hard, my dear. And you're far too good for that lazy Claude!"

Sporting old Henrietta! Martha smiled her forgiveness of the morning's gibes.

She wandered over the castle. Up and down stairs; in and out of dim shuttered rooms; onto sunny balconies. Down into the moldy, mildewed cellar; up to the wind-swept tower room. It was a beautiful, sad, haunted, old house. The thick walls spoke to her; they had a significance no other walls could have. The dark, cumbersome furniture had a message for her. A little lonely prince had studied these heavy books; had run on tiptoe through these impressive halls. A stout-hearted little boy and his "'fraid-cat" mother had clung together for comfort and companionship while the lonely days and weeks merged into lonely years. "Halloo! Are you there, my Philip?"

And Martha Drew, steady-nerved, sun-browned young Texan that she was, could hear the echoes of that call down the years. "Halloo!"

Inexplicably she was crying. Tears ran down her cheeks unheeded, unchecked.

She stood in one of the little curved landings and leaned her hot forehead against the cool windowpane. How far she had come—for this! All her life she had marched toward this hour, this scene, and never knew! While she was growing up to restless, rebellious womanhood out on the sand-swept prairie, this boy, Philip, was learning his lessons in patience and courage away over here in an Alvanian castle; was growing into the man she should love, the only man she ever could love.

Tears fell on her clenched hands.

THE next day Prince Philip came to call.

Henrietta was in a delirium of ecstasy as she hung chains of jewels over her satin gown.

"A message from the prince, my dear! Do you like the pearls best? Yes, at five o'clock. Don't be too long over your dressing, Martha; I need you downstairs."

Martha wore a slim, straight frock of yellow crêpe, inexpensive but beautiful. She seemed to glow in the dim old room like a ray of captured sunshine. Her hands were like ice as she waited. A quarter to five—ten minutes to five—

A tall figure came across the drawbridge.

If Henrietta was disappointed in the casual tweeds and informal manner of Alva's hereditary prince, she did not show it. She knew that he was preserving a strict incognito, and saw nothing amiss in his strolling up through the village street, soft-hatted, ungloved, to take tea with his Ameri-

can tenant. And she was thrilled to recognize in him the heel-clicking young man of her mountainside adventure.

She greeted him warmly, hilariously. "I always knew that you were no ordinary young fellow! Didn't I, Martha? I said there was *something* about Mr. Zeitlin, didn't I, Martha?"

Prince Philip kissed Miss Drew's hand.

For the moment they might have been the only two in the room, in the world, each so felt the isolating power of the other's nearness. She was acutely conscious of his questioning gaze upon her.

"You know I wasn't trying to be dramatic or—or funny, don't you, Miss Drew?" he said hurriedly, his face earnestly distressed. "There was a real reason for my—my stunt."

"Oh, I know that." Inherent honesty had its way with her. "You were trying to see the revolution from the people's side."

"Ah, yes! But it becomes a difficult job, believe me," he groaned, half laughing. Martha wondered what made this particular man so infinitely lovable, his least word so poignant and so touching. He looked tired. She longed to put her arm about his shoulders and have the smoothly brushed crest of his hair rest against her cheek. Suddenly he seemed pathetically young and naïve in his bewilderment. Not weak, not irresponsible; only baffled and puzzled by a situation that might have stumped a hoary-headed statesman. "They want liberty, my people, yet they are sore at me for relinquishing the throne, I'm told. What do they want?"

"What, indeed!" cried Henrietta. "Pay no attention to them, your highness! They have no minds, these Republicans. You were exactly right to give up trying to please them."

"No," he disclaimed earnestly, "it was not that I gave up trying. I really thought Alva might prosper under another form of government. This royalty stuff has about played out, you know, *madame*. Monarchs and thrones are passé. The world has gone democratic."

"Yes? Well, come to America, Prince Philip. Royalty is still popular with us!"

"You think so? No bomb throwers or cutthroats there, eh?"

"Oh, plenty! But not down our way. Try Texas, your highness."

Before the hour passed this suggestion was repeated many times in varying degrees of persuasiveness. And each succeeding repetition received more and more serious attention from Prince Philip.

"I could find a job, you think?" Very lightly, this. Then: "What could a badly educated man of twenty-seven do in the United States? Learn a trade? Be a head waiter?" And later, at parting, "Perhaps—who knows? I shall some day come to your Fort Worth in Texas. That great wide State seems most charming."

Martha, feeling the swift uprush of blood that dyed her cheeks crimson, tried to answer lightly. "Texas is more than charming, your highness. Texas is *simply grand!*"

"Then I must see Texas!"

He kissed Henrietta's hand. He kissed Martha's hand. He was gone.

Henrietta was in a high and happy mood. Her plans for enticing Prince Philip to Fort Worth fairly tripped over one another. "Why didn't I tell him about our tennis courts? I might get him in at the bank, eh? Martha, my dear, imagine introducing Prince

Philip to Fort Worth! A big tea—or a small dinner? And, believe me, Mr. and Mrs. Wilkins Quinn will not be invited! Wasn't it the luckiest thing, our coming here just now?"

She tried to share her elation with Claude when he came in, but Claude was sulky and distrait. He frowned and sat down in glum silence, looking as much like a thundercloud as his plump pink face would let him. His aunt ran on: "Why weren't you here, Claude? Charming fellow, the prince. Charming manners — quite handsome. He talks exactly like Maurice Chevalier—and looks like Rudy Vallée. Try to imagine that!"

"I can't," said Claude sourly. "I can't imagine it. And, what's more, I can't imagine why you and Martha want to go goofy over him. A plain shirker and coward, if you ask me. Abdicating his throne! Just plain ducking out to save his princely hide, that's what Philip XVI is doing!"

"Nonsense! It was with the kindest feeling on both sides that Prince Philip and the Alvanians parted company," protested Henrietta.

"Yeah—sez you!" Claude shrugged. "Keep your ear to the ground in the town below, and you'll hear different. The well-known populace is whetting its bowie knife for his highness right now."

"Nonsense!" said Henrietta again, and meant it.

But Martha's heart sank in sudden fear—not that Prince Philip's life was in danger, but that the hereditary ruler of Alva might have "ducked out" to save his princely skin. Son of an irresponsible father and a 'fraid-cat mother, how could he help it? Who could blame the boy, seeing crowned heads fall on every side, if he chose to duck out while he had the chance?

"Why did he come back if he's afraid?" she asked Claude.

"Oh, he's probably got a few pesos cached here in the castle. Maybe the family emeralds are hidden away in some secret chamber. Trust these birds to make a clean sweep!"

"Yeah—sez you!"

She swept out of the room before the astonished Claude recovered his speech.

"Wha-what's the matter with her?" he stuttered, turning on Henrietta accusingly. "Have you both lost your senses over this prince fellow?"

Henrietta didn't answer; her mind was far away.

"Yes, a small dinner, I think. And I'm sure old Jim Rountree will take him into the bank—"

IT became more and more a custom for Prince Philip to climb the hill and saunter across the drawbridge about sunset and have tea in the castle drawing-room. Not every evening, two or three times a week, perhaps, Martha would sight the strolling gray figure.

"The prince, Mrs. Penney," she would murmur, careful that none of the servants heard. "Prince Philip is in the courtyard."

"Yes? Now *what* was it I was meaning to tell him to-day about Texas? Quick, Martha—think!"

"The climate, wasn't it? The fine dry air."

"Ah, yes, the climate. Martha, I must persuade him to come home with us!"

And Henrietta would launch into eulogies of the Lone Star State as soon as the prince was seated. "Marvelously dry! Never any sloppy weather in Texas! The people so prosperous!

"Everybody has a car, a radio—why, we can hear the Stein Song from a dozen houses at once along our street. Every luxury—" And so on and so on.

Philip XVI listened gravely, saying little.

eh?" He smiled wryly. "Fortresses and strongholds—with the enemy advancing across the drawbridge. Might be fun for a gang, but not for one boy."

"Here she is!" cried Philip, and drew her forward for them all to see

Once he led them in a tour of the unused part of the castle, from dungeon to watchtower.

"Fine playground for a youngster,

Martha raised unwilling eyes to his. She knew he was remembering—"Halloo, my Philip!"

She looked away, trembling. Ah, it

was cruel how certain tones in his voice tore her heart!

Usually he said little to her directly. Most of his remarks were addressed to Mrs. Penney. But sometimes, as now, a quiet word, a glance, would draw the heart right out of her breast. She felt that it was intentional on his part, and she was unhappily aware that resistance was useless when that note roughened his voice. She *had* to turn to him.

Eyes would meet eyes in a deep look, and Prince Philip would go on talking to Henrietta, apparently satisfied. "These mile-long corridors might have made excellent race courses for a dozen little boys; for *one* they were just endless corridors."

Halloo, my Philip!

CLAUDE PENNEY grew sulkier day by day. He took particular pleasure in ridiculing his aunt and her secretary for their "goofiness" over the "prince fellow."

"What do you think this is—a Graustark romance? Nothing quite so simple, I'm telling you. It's about time for us to be pulling our freight out of here, the way things are looking. When the people-by-the-people party hear that his nibs is secretly receiving emissaries from those favoring the dynasty, something's going to *pop!*"

"But he isn't receiving emissaries," Martha countered. "They are nothing but friendly visits from his old friends. The people know nothing; he's incognito."

"Incognito, my eye! Don't make me laugh! With Dr. Everescu, the stiffest old die-hard in Alva, hot-footing it up to Philip's chalet every day or so, what's to hinder the people catching on? Don't underrate the republican intelligence, my dear; as sure as he lives, trouble's brewing for Philip XVI of Alva."

"Bunk!" shrugged Martha. "Bird of evil omen, thou! Honestly, now, Claude, you don't look gloomy or sad or foreboding. You're too fat for the part!"

She knew instantly that she had gone too far, and she was sorry. She put out a placating hand, smiled. After all, he wasn't so bad, poor lumpish Claude—and he loved her all he was able. "Sorry, Claude. I didn't mean to—"

But Claude, beyond the reach of smiles, was wallowing in bitterest humiliation. The face he turned on her flamed darkly.

"Stay here, then!" he stammered. "I'm leaving. You and Aunt Henrietta may stay with your pretty prince!"

His violence struck Martha like a blow in the chest. It seemed that the concentrated hatred loosed in that room was an actual menace; that there was enough malignancy there to destroy her. She shrank back, speechless. Claude went blindly out into the hall; went stumblingly down the hill.

The next day, when the prince came to tea, Martha tried to tell him something of what she'd heard.

"Has nobody discovered your identity?" she asked hurriedly, as they waited for Henrietta to come downstairs. "Isn't it possible that some one may have guessed and—and spread the news around that you have come home?"

"Oh, quite possible," he answered carelessly. "It's no matter, really. No one minds me. Did you say 'home'? I'd come *home?*" He laughed softly. "They have tried to tell me so, Dr. Everescu and other of my mother's old

friends. Three nights ago Count Presaner climbed to my chalet to offer me his sword. The old fire eater declared he could raise an army in an hour, and he wanted to set me back upon the throne of Alva. How I laughed!"

"You—*laughed?*"

"Yes, is it not amusing? They expect me to return to loneliness and restrictions and—and delusions of grandeur when I may be free and happy elsewhere! Yes, I laughed. I told them I had other plans."

"Plans?" She was a little breathless, and she could feel her cheeks glow and cool as the hot color fanned in and out of them. "Are you really considering Texas?"

"Come over here," he said, nodding toward the window.

Side by side they crossed the room, and surveyed the sweep of valley and the far-away mountains, dreaming in their haze of ever-varying blues and mauves. He drew a deep breath, then turned to her, serious, a little white.

"All this I am leaving," he said in a voice she had never heard before, "to begin anew in your Texas land. If I get a job and make good in it—if I make a man of myself over there in your country—have I a chance? Have I a chance with you, Martha? Could I ever win your love?" His hands came down on her shoulders, gripped her arms, slid down and caught her hands. His beseeching face was like a boy's, uncertain, brave, afraid. "I know that you have little use for my kind—princes and such—but if I get another job, Martha?"

"Philip!" she whispered sharply. For his arm was about her now so that she was close against him. "You are mad!"

"Not mad," he repeated, scarcely knowing what he said. "My beautiful—my lovely girl! Say that you're my girl, Martha!"

Mrs. Penney's high heels were on the stairs, her voice in the hall.

"Yes, I am—I do," Martha breathed confusedly, trying to push him away, trying to smile. "Let me go!"

"Kiss me," he said in an undertone, his lips close to hers.

"Wait. Not now!"

She was free then, and he was standing still, watching her.

Mrs. Penney came in. Martha, half dazed and only anxious to escape without betraying all that was seething in her heart, went swiftly out into the courtyard. Behind her Henrietta's booming voice and Prince Philip's gentler tones rose, fell—rose, fell.

She was in that dreamy ecstatic mood known only to the woman in love. The future concerned her not at all. She knew that Philip would find her again, would claim the kiss he had missed. She could not look ahead; her whole existence was centered upon the moment when he should appear, should come toward the old stone bench where she waited.

At last there came a step on the drawing-room balcony. She half rose to meet him as he crossed the courtyard. Her clean, bright, ardent lover—her prince!

"What a time that was!" he began while yet a little way off. "I was wild to follow you, my Martha."

He stopped. She saw his eyes narrow, sharpen.

She whirled toward some vague *stir* in the shrubbery behind her. Instinctively she sprang up, arms raised. "What is it? Philip!"

A deafening roar echoed against the castle walls, shook the stones under her

feet. The whole world seemed to vibrate.

And before her eyes she saw the prince sway, stumble, fall.

A man rushed past her to bend over him, pistol raised to shoot again.

"No, no!" She was tugging at his arm, was dragging the weapon away from its dreadful aim. "No—you shall not!"

Fear gave her extra strength. The next shot went wild, and the next.

"Ah! It is one wild cat!" she heard the man pant; and he seemed to laugh. "It is Mees Drew!"

She almost let go at that. The movie bolshevik—the hot-eyed fanatic of the filling station! "Why, Ivan!"

"Do not hold me," the boy whispered, breathing hard. "It is my chance to do something for Alva. Down with class rule!"

Martha wasted no breath in answering; all her strength was needed to keep that wicked black weapon from settling to steady aim. To keep it wavering—wavering—

Three shots. Four? She lost count.

Suddenly there were two simultaneous explosions. Ivan's arm seemed to wilt between her frantic hands; he sank, dragging her to her knees beside him.

When darkness became light again a man was lifting her to her feet. He was an old man, in uniform, and there were other uniformed men behind him, all armed.

"You are very brave," the old man was saying. "You have held this madman for us."

"He is dead?" She struggled to free herself. "Tell me—is he dead?"

"Yes, he is dead, poor misguided fellow!"

"Philip—dead!"

"It is Ivan Brianescu who is dead; mademoiselle," the old man said reprovingly. "His highness received a small scalp wound. He is coming round, thank God!"

"He lives?"

"But certainly!"

And at that Martha passed *quite* out.

A LOW-TONED argument was going on over her head as she came up out of the shadowy place into which she had dropped. "Now is the time—the time—the time—" a voice was droning. "This moment is like no other, your highness. Now is the time!"

"No!" It was Philip's voice, agitated, stern. "Never shall *she* live this uneasy life, and I will not give her up!"

"But they want you! Your people are calling you—hear them? Speak to them!"

"They don't know what they want. Let them howl!"

Martha opened her eyes. Philip bent over her. At the sight of his bandaged head and torn, blood-stained shirt, she tried to sit up, shaking uncontrollably. "Oh, I remember now!"

"Be still, my heart!"

Across Philip's shoulder the gray old man frowned down upon her.

"Dr. Everescu?" she whispered. "What is it you want Philip to do?"

"It is nothing—nothing!" the prince interposed hurriedly. "You saved my life, my Martha; I belong to you if you'll have me. *Not* to those outside who would kiss my hand one day, and shoot me down the next!"

"They need you," the old man persisted. "Alva needs you, your highness. And now is the time."

"No!"

"Yes!" said Martha, and sat up.

"You belong to them, Philip. Go to your people—now!"

"You send me to them?" Indignation, pride, regret were blended in his expression. "You are willing to have me do this? Ah, Martha, that Texas-land of yours was too good to be true!"

"You cannot shirk."

She felt his lips upon her hand; then he was gone.

She heard the crowd outside burst into applause as Philip appeared on the balcony. There were cheers, laughter, torrents of speech.

She had given him back to his people. That dear, brief dream of happiness—she had given that, too. For Alva—everything! Their love, their unkissed kisses—they had given them all. She wished now that she had kissed him that time—only an hour ago?—when he had asked her to.

Sobs trembled through her, but her lips were tight. Had she, too, known all along that it was "too good to be true"?

Dr. Everescu and Henrietta murmured and were silent. Outside the drawing-room windows louder cheers rang out, then quieted under Prince Philip's voice as he spoke to the populace.

This then was to be his life: adulation; responsibility; danger. How far from his "Texas-land" job and freedom!

Suddenly Dr. Everescu held out his hand, smiled. "You are able to stand now? His highness begs you—"

But Prince Philip was beside her, his face alight.

"Come, my Martha! They want to see you."

A multitude, it seemed, surged and swayed down there in the weird light of the flares. A blur of faces lifted toward her; here and there one gleamed astonishingly clear for an instant, then faded back into obscurity. All were laughing, happy.

"Here she is!" cried Philip, adding some unintelligible phrase in a strange dialect.

Clamor and tumult greeted his words; the crowd leaned forward as one man to see Martha.

Prince Philip took her hand and lifted it high.

More cheers. Fresh torrents of speech. And Philip laughing—laughing!

"What is it they say?"

"Don't you understand? They're wishing us happiness. They are calling down heaven's blessings upon the prince's fiancée!"

"Your—fiancée!"

Her head came up. High. She stepped to the balcony railing; she stretched out her hands; she kissed her fingers. "Thank you—thank you!" she said to them, tears and smiles on her face. "Thank you, my own people!"

Henrietta held out her feet to the porcelain stove. "Darn these things," she said mildly. "Give me a nice homey gas log every time! So it was Claude's tattling caused all the trouble, Dr. Everescu? I'm sorry."

"No harm done, really. The prince's position is all the stronger for this little blood letting. Queer, romantic people!"

"Well, I'm sorry anyway. Must try to make up for it. How about a nice wedding check to Martha?"

"A fine idea, madame."

"No, there's no reason—" Prince Philip objected.

"Certainly you may give me a wedding check, my dear," Martha cut in. "And I hope it's a great big one!"

"It will be," Henrietta promised. She turned to Dr. Everescu. "Say to the press to-morrow, sir, that Mrs. Penney, a life-long friend of the bride-elect, is making the young pair a gift of two—million—dollars."

"Yes, madame."

"And the wedding is to be in June."

Prince Philip turned to Martha. Their eyes met. They forgot Henrietta, the old doctor.

In June—in June—

Message

TO-NIGHT I saw a slender moon
Against a deepening sky;
A slender, silver, sickle moon,
A dainty moon and shy.

Close by the little silver moon
Venus spilled her fire;
White rays gleamed in the dark lagoon
Like quivering, young desire.

The little slender, sickle moon
Was shy, as I have said;
She ran behind the long sand dune
And hid her pretty head.

But the star of love still burned above,
And smiled at the way of a moon;
To-night so cold, to-morrow bold . . .
Sweetheart, you'll love me soon!

—Elizabeth Montefiori

Jilted

If your name was smirched before the world, your fiancé threw you over, your father turned you out of your home, what would you do?

By Eleanor Elliott Carroll

Author of "The Unwanted Bride," etc.

"AWFULLY sorry, Beth," Clayton Henning's crisp voice rang clearly over the telephone wire, "but a fine prospect has shown up, and I can't keep our date this evening. There'll be plenty more shows, though, and business must come first. If I get through in time I might drive out to your place. 'By."

Beth Manners hung up the receiver slowly. She dreaded to turn around, knowing she was the target of all eyes in Lane's Dress Shop. The girls knew she expected Clay to call for her. Mae Brooks had just been teasing her about wearing her new ensemble to work.

Now Clay wasn't coming at all. This was the third time in two weeks that the same thing had occurred. Her fingers trembled as they reached for her coat. She lingered as long as possible in putting it on, relieved to hear the other girls going toward the dressing room in the rear. If only she could get out of the shop without having any one speak to her. She knew her voice would betray her feelings.

"Listen, Beth." A hand touched her arm. "I couldn't help hearing, and I think it's a darned shame. Broke a date again, didn't he?" Mae Brooks, a plump, pretty girl, was standing beside her.

"He—it's business," Beth faltered. "He couldn't help it."

"Business, blah!" Mae's black eyes snapped. "Don't you stand for that sort of hooey, kid. Buck up and give the lad a jolt. Find yourself another boy friend. You're no flop. I know a half dozen who'd be tickled pink to take you places. Come go with Harry Foster and me to-night. There's a dance on at Singer Hall—"

"I can't, Mae," Beth broke in tremulously. "He—Clay's coming out home later. Really, he couldn't miss a fine sale just—just for a dinner and a

Google

Tenderly the girl ministered to her patient

show. He's awfully ambitious and wants to get ahead."

"Yeah. That's the line they all pull. Here you are, just a few weeks from your wedding day, and letting him get away with this stuff. Once you're married, you'll sit at home every night, while he's out hunting *business!* You're making yourself too cheap, Beth. Clayton Henning takes you out to a hash joint once in a blue moon, and thinks he's giving you a hot party. I'd like to see Harry pull a trick like this on me."

"Clay's trying to save," Beth defended. "He's buying our home, you know."

"Well, he certainly owes you some sort of a time while you're engaged. This saving business is all right when it's not carried too far. Do without everything while you are young to save for a rainy day, and you'll find yourself all wet when it comes. Come on, Beth, go with us to-night."

"I'm sorry, Mae, but I just can't. Thanks a lot for asking me, anyway." Beth moved toward the door, afraid to trust herself to say another word. She knew the girl meant only kindness, but it hurt her to hear Clay criticized.

THROUGHOUT the long bus ride to the edge of the city, her thoughts were unhappy ones. It was not that she distrusted Clay. As he often told her, an automobile salesman had to hustle in these days of so much competition. But it was hard always to have your pleasure set aside for business, even if you did know that the man you loved was putting his money in your future home.

Home. The word thrilled her, comforted her. In a few weeks she'd be the mistress of a tiny, stuccoed bungalow, in the Anneslie development. How she had dreamed of it, planning its pretty appointments; from the dainty green enameled ware in the kitchen to

the sheer net curtains at the living room windows. And now that Clay had this new prospect, they could buy their long-planned furniture for breakfast room and spare bedroom.

She should feel nothing but gratitude toward Clay for loving her, for taking her away from a home which had been so unpleasant since her father's second marriage a year ago. The new Mrs. Manners had been a widow with two children, Ralph, a boy of fifteen, and Helen, who was a few months older than Beth. Helen now shared her room, ransacked her dresser drawers, confiscated her handkerchiefs and stockings, and kept that one-time little sanctuary in maddening disorder. Beth yearned for the day when she would again have her own privacy.

The bus finally reached its terminal, and Beth got out in a dreary drizzle. There was a lonely half mile to walk before she reached her home. The desolate road stretched ahead in semi-darkness, and to keep up her spirits she hummed a gay little tune as she neared the old Garrett place, with its high brick wall and tall, spectral cedars.

She quickened her steps when the big iron gateway loomed in sight. She was seldom as late as this, and never before had she walked this road alone after dark. The girl kept her head turned from the ghostly old mansion, with its Gothic roof and ivy-hung chimneys. No one had lived there for over twenty years, and the superstitious country folk declared the place was haunted. It was so desolate, and the rustling boughs above her head sounded like weird whispering.

Suddenly she came to a dead stop. Her rapid pace was arrested by a peculiar sound—something between a moan and a cry. It seemed to come from inside the Garrett grounds.

Beth's hand went to her heart, which was thumping wildly. But the next instant she was telling herself how foolish it was to be frightened. It couldn't be a person. No doubt an animal of some sort—no, there it was again, unmistakably a human being groaning, calling faintly: "Help! Whoever you are, won't you—help—me?"

BETH was not a coward. She lifted the rusty latch and went inside the grounds.

"What's the matter?" she called tremulously, fighting down her natural fears.

A limp white hand over by the fountain waved feebly. A youthful voice answered:

"Please see what this contraption is that's caught my ankle. It threw me, I fell on my left arm, and—I guess I faded out of the picture."

Beth ran over and knelt beside the sufferer. She felt along his twisted leg until her fingers touched a steel bar. Then she understood.

"You're in a trap set for animals," she told him. "The farmers have been losing their sheep, and have set them everywhere. I know how it works. If you'll keep still a minute I'll open it."

Her hands worked deftly, and the steel bands parted. The man gave a sigh of relief, then lay quite still. For a moment she thought he had fainted, and was wondering what to do next when he opened his eyes.

"You've no broken bones," she encouraged gently. "Try to stand up. Lean on me."

The stranger struggled to a sitting position and peered at her through the gloom. She could scarcely discern his features, but managed to get a vague impression of a boyish face, a sensitive, well-cut mouth, and a square, de-

termined chin. A thin stream of blood was trickling down his cheek from a cut on his head.

"Struck the rim of the fountain when I fell," he said faintly. "Heard you — singing — called. Think you could help me inside the house? Don't believe I — can — make it — alone."

Beth stared down at him with surprise. "That house is closed," she told him. "Nobody has lived there for many years. It belongs—"

"To me," was the astounding interruption. "I am Christopher Garrett, and I've been stopping here since morning. I didn't notice this darned trap, though, till I stepped in it. If you'll be so kind as to give me a little assistance—I won't lean on you any more than I can help."

Beth held out her hands and he struggled upward. She was awed into silence for a moment. Christopher Garrett! What a sensation there would be in the community to learn that a Garrett had come back to his long deserted home.

She recovered her voice.

"Don't mind leaning heavily," she said softly. "I'm strong. Put your arm around my shoulders. There, that's it."

Together they proceeded toward the paved court, with its enormous white pillars. Beth noticed he was very tall, topping her by fully a head, and she was five feet six. She managed to reach the big oaken doors.

"It's unlocked," he gasped. "Just push—against—it."

They passed into a vast, musty hall. He motioned toward a door at the far end from which a faint light glimmered. This room was evidently a library, and showed signs of occupation. A candle burned dimly on the mantel, and there was a smoldering fire in the cavernous chimney place. A couch had been drawn up before the fire, and Christopher Garrett dropped heavily upon it.

"I'll be all right in—a—moment," he jerked out, fighting to control the pain he was enduring. And then his head fell back on the cushions. He had fainted.

Beth was a little person of many capabilities. She knelt beside the unconscious man and hastily removed his shoe and blood-drenched sock, flinching slightly at the sight of his mangled flesh. What could she use for a bandage? The mildewed old chair covers would never do; neither would the dusty bags in which the pictures were encased. Then she spied an open Gladstone bag near by; yes, it held piles of snowy handkerchiefs.

Water. She must have water. There was a pitcher on the long mahogany table, with a glass beside it. She caught it up, breathing a sigh of relief to find it half filled.

THE color was returning to the injured man's lips. He moved slightly, then opened his eyes. A sweet, girlish face was bending over him. A heart-shaped little face, framed in masses of crinkly chestnut hair. Beth's anxious blue eyes brightened as he stared at her, trying to smile.

"I'm ashamed of myself," he apologized. "I know I've frightened you by bowling over like that. Never did such a thing before in all my life. I owe you a thousand thanks for what you've done."

A warm flush stained Beth's cheeks. "Indeed, you don't owe me anything, Mr. Garrett," she denied. "I've bandaged your ankle as well as I could. Is there anything else I can do?"

He glanced at his neatly bound foot, then back at her, his white teeth flashing in an attractive smile.

"I think I've imposed upon you enough," he said slowly, giving her an admiring survey. "You're a girl in a thousand. Most of them would have run for help when I keeled over. Won't you tell me to whom I owe undying gratitude?"

"I am Beth Manners," she informed him. "My father's dairy farm isn't far from here, and if you'd like to have a doctor see your foot and ankle, I'm sure I can get—"

"No, I don't need a doctor, Miss Manners." Christopher Garrett sat up suddenly, a serious expression on his handsome face. "Don't misunderstand or think I'm sailing under false colors," he went on whimsically, pointing toward his bag. "Those are my initials on that leather, and all my clothes have my name on them. This place belonged to my grandfather, and is now mine. But I'm very anxious to keep my presence here a secret from everybody, for reasons which I can't explain. I'm sure you'll not give me away."

"Of course I won't," Beth answered, buttoning her coat. "But what will you do for a bed to-night—for food? It will be some time before you can walk on that foot."

Christopher glanced ruefully at his bandaged leg.

"That's right," he agreed. "I guess I can manage to sleep on this couch, and there's my overcoat for cover. Will you hand it to me, please?"

Beth laid it over him carefully, then stooped to pile more wood on the glowing coals. When she turned she found Christopher Garrett's brilliant dark eyes fastened upon her, and again that strange thrill passed through her.

"I must go now," she said, almost shyly. "I hate to leave you alone like this, though. Really, you should have medical attention. That old trap was rusty, and such a wound is dangerous, you know."

He shook his head. "I'll be all right. I don't want it known that I'm here."

"I won't mention it," she promised again. "I'll stop by in the morning, on my way to work, and bring some antiseptic, also some bandages, and your breakfast. I hope you'll be able to sleep, Mr. Garrett."

He reached for her hand, pressing it warmly between both of his.

"You're an angel," he said fervently. "Be sure to come. Don't forget."

"I won't. I'll be here by seven o'clock. Good night."

BETH'S thoughts traveled faster than her feet as she scurried down the gloomy, rain-swept road. What an amazing adventure it had been! Never in her memory had a Garrett lived in the deserted old mansion. She recalled having heard her father speak of old Colonel Garrett, a harsh, unfriendly, pompous aristocrat, who had disinherited his only son for marrying a chorus girl. For years he had lived alone in his magnificent home, seeing no one except his servants, going nowhere.

And then there had been an accident—a train wreck. Beth didn't remember the particulars, but whatever happened resulted in the death of both the disinherited son and his wife. Colonel Garrett closed his place and went north, never to return.

Her musings were interrupted by the sight of some one coming toward her with a lantern. It was Clayton Henning! He called to her:

Go gle

"That you, Beth? Where on earth have you been? I got through my business in less than half an hour, and hustled out here for you. We've been worried sick."

He came up to her, a rather short, wiry young man of twenty-eight, with an alert dark face, and piercing gray eyes which were fixed upon Beth in a reproachful stare.

"Who've you been out with?" he demanded gruffly.

"I haven't been out with any one," Beth answered quickly. "Mae Brooks asked me to go to a dance with her and Harry, but I refused. I know I'm a little late. I—I couldn't help it."

"Oh, that's how it was, eh?" Clayton's tone softened. "You were with Mae. I'm glad you didn't take her up on her invitation. Don't care for my girl to be gallivanting around to dances with a bunch of whoopee hounds. Come on, let's hurry out of this rain. You're soaking wet, honey." He slipped his arm through hers and led her down the road.

Beth breathed hard. Her natural impulse would have been to tell Clayton the whole truth, but she still had Christopher Garrett's plea ringing in her ear. Wild horses could never drag his secret from her.

"Made a fine sale to-night," Clayton announced proudly. "Sold twelve trucks to a new delivery company that's just opened up. Got the order right off the bat, then hustled out to tell you about it. I was getting ready to drive off when I thought I saw you down the road, so I grabbed up the lantern and came to meet you."

"I'm so glad about your luck, Clay." Beth squeezed his hand. "You'll get a big commission, won't you?"

"Pretty fair. But don't call it luck. It's having a good business head and a clever line of talk. Two other fellows were after that deal, but I beat 'em to it. Guess I'll haul in about a thousand bucks before Sunday."

"Oh, that's w-o-nderful!" praised Beth. "Now we can buy that darling breakfast room suite we saw in Pollard's window, can't we, Clay? You know you said—"

"Now see here, Beth," he cut in. "You mustn't get the habit of spending money as soon as it's made. I want to accumulate something while I'm young. We don't need to fix up more than two or three rooms at the start. Keep the others closed for a while, and eat our breakfast in the kitchen."

Beth made no answer. She felt as if cold water had been dashed in her face. Why was Clay always taking the romance out of life? She was far from being extravagant, but she had taken such a joy in their little bungalow, and now to be told that they would only furnish two or three rooms!

She was glad to reach her home, a two-story frame building sitting back in a weedy, neglected garden. Clayton's roadster was standing in front of the gate.

"I won't come in," he announced briskly. "This drizzle may turn into a regular downpour, and my windshield wiper isn't working. I can't see you to-morrow, Beth. Got to run up to Cumberland, and mightn't get back until Saturday. Be a good girl, and don't get mixed up with Mae Brooks's wild bunch. 'Night, honey."

She lifted her face for his kiss, then watched him get in his car and drive off. As she went slowly toward the porch, she chided herself for her resentful thoughts. Of course Clay was only trying to provide for her future.

After they were married she intended to help him save, but right now she'd love to be petted and indulged like other engaged girls she had seen with their sweethearts.

HELEN WADE met her inside the narrow hall. She was a slightly built girl, with bobbed black hair, a shrewd, narrow face, and greenish eyes that were set too close together for beauty.

"Hope Clay didn't bump into a little party," she sang out. "My, but that boy was mad when he didn't find you here. Where'd you go, Beth? Who was with you?"

"I didn't go anywhere, and I wasn't with any one," Beth retorted sharply, then went on into the dining room. Her father, a stout, gray-haired man, was reading the paper, and Mrs. Manners, a faded replica of Helen, sewed by the light of an oil lamp. She looked up and said peevishly:

"You're awfully late, Beth. Hope you've had your dinner, because there's nothing left. We didn't expect you home. Thought you were with Clayton. Where'd you go?"

"It's all right about dinner." Beth ignored the last question, and was going out of the door when her father stopped her.

"Your mother asked where you've been, Beth," he said sternly. "Answer her this minute. I won't stand for any disrespect in my house."

Beth's lips quivered. "I—I didn't come straight home," she managed. "One of the girls wanted me to—to go somewhere with her—" She ran from the room and up the stairs, afraid she'd break down under her father's cold, accusing eyes.

He had changed so much during the past year, she thought miserably, as she picked up Helen's things from the floor of their mutual room. It had been so different when her own mother was alive. In those happy days Beth had not gone to the city as a clerk, but had cheerfully helped around the house, doing many of the numberless jobs that a dairy farm entails.

But Margaret Manners had scarcely been gone six months before her father brought home a new wife. Then everything was changed. Beth had been thankful for the opportunity to earn her own living, and when Clayton Henning asked her to marry him, she'd gratefully accepted his proposal.

It would be freedom, at least.

She pretended to be asleep when Helen came up, but lay there for hours, wide awake, her thoughts on the young sufferer in that gloomy, cobwebby old mansion. His foot was badly mangled. It would be days before he could bear his weight upon it; meanwhile, what would he do for the necessities of life? Why did he refuse to have a physician? Why was he hiding? He certainly was not in need of money. Colonel Garrett had been an enormously wealthy man, and evidently had left his fortune to his grandson.

She must not forget to take plenty of food for him to-morrow, and she'd have to leave home earlier than usual. If any questions were asked, she would say she had extra work on hand, which was true.

It was long after midnight when Beth finally fell asleep, yet she was up in the early dawn of a drizzly October morning. She always took her lunch with her, and on this occasion it was amazing how much food she managed to pack into her lunch box. She also filled a thermos bottle with steaming coffee, something she never drank. Fortunately, Mrs. Manners was too

busy to notice what her stepdaughter was doing.

BETH'S heart beat wildly as she opened the tall iron gates of the Garrett place, ran up the circular driveway and rapped on the great door. She turned the knob and entered the hall, where she hesitated.

"Mr. Garrett!" she called. "It's Beth Manners. May I come in?"

There was no reply. Beth went toward the library and peered in. He was lying as she had left him, asleep. But his eyes opened almost immediately, and he stared at her without recognition for a long moment. Bright, feverish eyes. His face looked queer, and going over to him, she recognized the meaning of the crimson flush that spread from brow to throat. She laid her hand on his forehead. He was burning up with fever.

What should she do? She couldn't leave him like this; she'd have to go for help, no matter whether he wanted it or not.

"Keep it—there," he babbled, touching her hand. "It feels—so cool. I—remember you. You're the girl who—brought me in—last night. I—heard you—singing, and called out. Don't—tell any one I'm here."

"That's all right," she soothed, not knowing how she was to keep her word. "Just lie quiet while I dress your foot again."

A busy hour followed. Beth had not lived on a farm for all of her nineteen years without learning a great deal about illness and injury. Scarcely a week passed that some farm hand wasn't hurt, and it always fell to her lot to administer first aid.

It was long past opening time at the store, and to-day was Friday, the busiest one of the week, but Beth's thoughts were not on Lane's Dress Shop. She was studying the fine, clean-cut face on the pillow she had managed to slip beneath that well-shaped young head. The hot flush was fading from his cheeks, and he was deathly pale, even to his lips. But his breathing was regular now, and once he murmured a name in his sleep. Involuntarily Beth leaned forward to listen:

"Judy—Judy mustn't know. Tell her it was I—" He stopped suddenly, his eyes opening. He stared straight at the girl who was watching him so intently, lifted one hand to his bandaged head, then raised himself on one elbow.

"I've given you the dickens of a lot of trouble, haven't I?" he asked boyishly. "I remember your coming in this morning, then I must have faded out of the picture. Gosh, I had a wretched night. But I feel all to the good now. That is, I would if I had a cup of coffee."

Beth flashed him a delightful smile. "I have it right here," she told him. She poured the steaming beverage into a little cup she'd brought, arranged some slices of cold chicken on a small paper plate, also two hard-boiled eggs, and an orange, then carried it around to him. He ate greedily whatever she fed him, much to Beth's pleasure.

"Talk about your Florence Nightingales," he said once, "you've got her beat a mile. Tell me something about yourself. I feel as if I'd known you all your life."

Beth colored warmly to the roots of her bright hair, but she complied with his request, relating her entire commonplace little history. It was strange, though, that not once did she mention Clayton Henning. She could not have explained that important omission to herself.

"And you've given up your work this morning for me," Christopher said slowly, fixing her with an admiring look. "I feel awfully guilty about it, Miss Manners."

"Oh, that's all right," Beth hastened to say. "I'm just wondering if there's anything else I can do before I go. And I want to tell you I went upstairs to search for these blankets and the sheets. If you could manage to reach one of the bedrooms—"

"Can't be done—yet," he grimaced. "Every move I make shoots fire through my foot, darn it. There's nothing I can do but depend upon you for the present, anyway. Think of landing in this old place that I've dreamed of all my life, then getting in this mess. If it hadn't been so dark I might have seen that trap. When I heard you singing, honestly, I thought it was an angel's voice. What was the song? I'm not familiar with it."

Again the hot flush stole into her cheeks.

"It—it's just a little thing my mother used to sing," she stammered. "She called it 'You.' A poem, I believe. Mother used to make all her favorite verses into songs."

"Will you sing it to me sometime?" he asked boldly.

Beth got up. "Maybe," she smiled. "I've got to go now, Mr. Garrett, but I'll come by this evening with your dinner—"

His hand shot out and caught hers, stopping her in the middle of her speech. His dark, bright eyes held her.

"Call me Chris," he pleaded, "and let me call you Beth, won't you? How old are you, anyway?"

"Nineteen," she said promptly.

"And I'm twenty-four. I should have been living right here all my life, Beth, and then we would have known each other all *your* life. We're going to be friends, aren't we?"

"Y-e-s," she breathed.

"Say 'yes, Chris,'" he prompted.

She repeated the words, then backed toward the door. "Look for me at six," she called over her shoulder as she ran down the hall.

"I'll be counting the seconds, Beth." His clear young voice floated after her.

ALL that day Beth moved as if in a trance. Her usually nimble hands fumbled, and the regular customers at Lane's Shop missed the alert, willing services of their favorite clerk.

"What's the matter, Beth?" asked Mae Brooks. "You act like you're in a daze. Do you know you actually showed that stout old dame a scarlet sports suit? I almost dropped in my tracks, and the look she gave you would 've withered a stone. You and Clay haven't had a fight, I hope?"

For the first time that morning Beth remembered the man she was to marry in less than three weeks. The color fled from her cheeks, and there was a startled expression in her blue eyes. Clay! What would he say if he knew she was visiting and waiting on a perfect stranger? A person she had never seen until yesterday? A wave of relief swept through Beth as she remembered that Clay was up in Cumberland, and would not be back until Sunday evening.

"Clay and I never quarrel," she told Mae loftily, and turned to wait upon a customer.

The day dragged on toward the closing hour. Never had Beth been such a clock watcher, but she excused this to herself with the thought of Christopher Garrett's pressing needs. Any one would feel anxious about a person

who was helpless and without the necessities of life. Dependent upon her for everything. Strange what a thrill went through her veins at the thought.

She hurried from the shop as soon as the doors closed, stopping at a delicatessen, where she bought a roast chicken, some rolls, butter, and a pound of coffee. A slim meal for a man who had been accustomed to the best of everything, she thought, but it would have to do.

Christopher Garrett greeted her warmly. He was sitting up before the fire, his injured foot encased in a red leather slipper. He had made an attempt to dress himself. A velvet smoking jacket was visible, and his dark hair had been brushed until it shone.

"Hello," he cried. "Here's my good Samaritan again. What's all that you've got?" He eyed the bundles she placed on the table.

"Dinner for you," she said merrily. "All we need is a kettle to heat water. Think I might find one in the kitchen?"

"You'll find anything there that a housekeeper could desire," was the gay reply. "I've been over the whole shack to-day, and it's a peach of an old place."

"You have?" Beth stared her astonishment and disapproval.

"I managed to hobble up the stairs with the aid of this old cane." He held out a stout hickory staff. "I had to do something. Couldn't lie here and think over my sins."

"Have you so many?" she wanted to know.

"Oh, loads of 'em. Tell you about it sometime. But right now, let's hurry the eats. I'm starved."

They had great fun, those two young people, preparing the simple meal which Chris insisted that Beth share with him. The fire blazed on the hearth, the kettle simmered cheerily, and from above the mantel the life-size portrait of Colonel Garrett seemed watching every move. The piercing eyes were so like those of the handsome youth sitting opposite her that Beth knew intuitively whose likeness it was before Chris spoke.

"Dear old Grandy," he said, glancing at the painting. "He always wanted to come back home. I promised him I'd fix up the old place some day, and now that I've seen it"—he gave Beth a lingering glance—"I've about decided I'll do so."

"Your grandfather is dead?" she asked confusedly, evading his penetrating stare.

"Yes. Over ten years ago. After my parents died, Grandy came up to Boston and took my brother and me to Europe. We were educated at Oxford. Came back to America two years ago."

"Your brother, is he younger than you?" she inquired interestedly.

"No, two years older. Listen, Beth," he said suddenly, changing the subject abruptly; "in a day or so I'll be able to navigate without any trouble, and I want to show you over the house. Maybe you'll give me a few ideas about fixing the place up. Oh, you'll have to come to see me twice a day while I'm crippled. But I can't be a sponge. I wonder if you will market for me a while?"

"Surely I will," she said readily. "I'd love to."

AND so it became a regular custom for Beth to stop by in the morning, get Christopher's necessarily small orders—small because she had to bring them—and return in the evenings to prepare his dinner.

Fortunately, Clayton Henning's trip

lengthened into a full week. Beth received a daily letter from him which she scanned carelessly. Each was filled with accounts of his success in the various towns he was visiting, and only in the last paragraph did he mention anything personal. This was usually the trite old saying: "Be good and don't take any wooden money."

Lips quivering, Beth jerked away, holding him off with out-stretched arms

Money. That was Clay's god. Sometimes Beth's naturally bright spirits quailed at the thought of her future with a man whose sole idea was to accumulate more and more. Especially since she had known Christopher Garrett. But she always chided herself for blaming Clay. After all, he loved her as well as he could, in his matter-of-fact way, and there could never have been anything between her and Christopher Garrett, anyway, she told herself, then shivered at the daring thought. Why, a Garrett would never look at the daughter of a dairy farmer with the idea of marriage!

The growing friendship between the young man and the whole-souled girl was as frank and innocent as if they had been children together. Neither considered it any impropriety to wander about the old mansion together, examining the massive furniture, the faded but once elegant hangings, and the beautiful paintings.

Chris was as charmed over his possessions as was Beth. The vast drawing room entranced her, and one evening as they were in this room, he lifted the top of the grand piano, touched the yellow keys softly.

"Not in such bad tune, considering how long it has been closed," he said. "Try it, Beth."

She sat down on the bench and let

her fingers wander over the keys, drifting into a sweet little melody. He leaned over her, saying excitedly:

"That's it—the song you were singing on the road the night I was hurt. Please sing it again, Beth."

She hesitated a moment, then began tremulously:

"I'd rather have the thought of you
To hold against my heart,
My spirit to be taught of you
With west winds blowing,
Than all the warm caresses
Of another love's bestowing,
Or all the glories of the world
In which you had no part."

There was a silence when she finished. The clear, true contralto might be untrained, but its poignant sweetness sent a wild longing through Christopher. He came over to her and laid both hands on her slim shoulders.

"'I'd rather have the thought of you to hold against my heart,'" he repeated huskily, staring down. Such purity, such childlike candor in those violet eyes. "A beautiful song, little Samaritan, and you sing exquisitely. Teach it to me, won't you, so I may sing it to—*you?* I'd love to, Beth; I'd mean every word—"

She got up quickly.

"I'll—I'll write them for you," she laughed unsteadily. "Now I must go. It—it must be awfully late."

"Why, you've been here but a short while," he protested. "And you always stay till eight. It can't be more than seven thirty." He pulled out his watch and held it before her. "Just seven ten, see?"

But Beth backed toward the door, her small, heartshaped face strangely pale in the flickering light of several candles.

"I'll have to," she insisted. "My father—I have been telling him that I was with a friend every evening, and he said last night that I must come home earlier. Good-night."

She flitted through the folding doors. Chris heard her little feet tapping down the hall. He didn't move; just stood quite still, staring ahead. But there was a deep tenderness in his dark eyes, and a smile curved his lips.

"Little shy darling," he breathed softly. "She does care! I frightened her, though. She's not used to men, and, after all, I'm almost a stranger to her."

He limped into the library and sank into a wing chair before the fire that Beth had kindled. Long hours he sat there, staring into the coals. Building castles, as thousands of lovers have done from time immemorial. He saw the old mansion renovated, refurnished, and the girl he knew he loved with every beat of his heart, flitting about the spacious rooms, mistress of the establishment, his adored young wife.

"I knew she was the one girl in the whole world for me, when I saw her for the first time," he mused, half aloud. "And to-night—that song—she sang it for *me*. I'll hold her to-morrow evening and *make* her listen . . ."

BUT many things were to happen before Christopher Garrett again saw the girl he loved.

That same evening when Beth reached home, she found the family in a state of tense excitement. They were gathered in the dining room, listening intently to a tale which Ralph Wade, the freckled-faced, shock-headed son of Mrs. Manners, was telling. Beth was about to pass on up to her room, when something the boy said caught her attention. She stopped.

"It's the truth, Mom," Ralph was saying. "I went inside the Garrett grounds to see if my trap had caught the varmint that's killing sheep, and I saw a light in the house. I heard somebody singing. It sounded like Beth, but 'course it wasn't. You ask Bob Taylor if you don't believe me. Both of us heard it. Bob says it's the ghost of Colonel Garrett's daughter-in-law that the old man turned outer the house, years ago. He's seen her walking round the terraces at night. We sure did run away from that place, but we're going back tomorrow night and watch for the hant."

"Nonsense," said John Manners. "You keep away from there, Ralph. If you actually heard something, it was live people. There's no such thing as ghosts. More likely some marauders have taken possession of the old house. I'll report it to the sheriff to-morrow, and have him search—" He stopped, saw Beth outside the door, called to her.

"Have you noticed any lights in the old Garrett mansion? Ralph says he and Bob Taylor saw the place lighted up, and heard somebody singing."

"No—I—didn't look," stammered Beth, a terrified quiver passing over her.

"Well, anyhow, you mustn't come home after dark again, Beth. That road's not safe for a girl alone. I've been hearing all sorts of reports about bootlegging 'round these parts. If Clay can't bring you home, I'll have to send one of the hands to meet the bus."

Beth nodded assent. She couldn't have spoken had her life depended upon it. She was turning to leave the room when Helen ran after her, thrusting a letter into her hands.

"Must be awfully important," she laughed, "Clay's spent ten cents on a special delivery stamp. When I get engaged, it won't be to a flat tire like that, I'll tell the world." There was a greenish glint in Helen's eyes as she spoke. Clayton Henning had been calling on her when he met Beth, and from that day on he had transferred his attention to the younger and far prettier girl. It had been a bitter day for both Helen and her mother, when Beth's engagement to the enterprising young salesman was announced, and this was the cause of their antagonism toward her.

Up in her room, Beth dropped upon a chair beside the window. She was trembling in every limb. Suppose Ralph had seen her come out of the Garrett house? He'd heard her singing, and had almost recognized her voice! Oh, she couldn't go there again; it was too dangerous. But what would Chris do without the daily supplies that she brought to him? She might manage to leave eggs, milk and rolls in the mornings, but never again could she visit him on her way home at night.

"It's better that I don't," she murmured through quivering lips, as she tore open Clay's letter.

It was a few scrawled lines to tell her he would arrive the following afternoon, and would call at the Lane store for her.

"We'll go somewhere for a bite to eat and a long talk," he added. "I've a bunch of things to tell you, and some new plans to make for our future."

Their future. She and Clay together forever. No romance, no laughter or song, and—no Chris. Even if Chris did renovate his old home and live there, friendship would be an impossibility. She could not imagine him and Clay together.

"I don't know what's the matter with me," sobbed Beth. "I used to count the days till Clay and I would be married, and now I—I don't care whether that time ever—comes . ."

THE next morning she left her lunch box and a bottle of milk just outside the Garrett door. There was a slip of paper tied to the handle of the box:

> . . . so you see I can't stop by in the evenings. But I'll bring whatever I can mornings. Please don't try to see me when I come. I don't know who's watching, and I'd get into a lot of trouble.

She was unlike her usual self that evening. Sitting opposite Clayton Henning in a small cheap restaurant, Beth scarcely heard a dozen words he said. She was thinking of Christopher Garrett, alone in that gloomy old house, without food, perhaps without water. She'd forgotten to pump a day's supply for him, and he could never do it for himself!

"What's wrong with you, Beth?" demanded Clay, his narrow face drawn into an ugly frown. "Here I've been talking my head off, telling you about the trip to Cumberland, and I'll bet my head you haven't been listening."

"Yes, I have," she said breathlessly. "You said — said something about—about—" She paused, staring at him in bewilderment. What had he said?

"I knew it," angrily. "The biggest thing that's ever happened in my life, and you, the girl who'll be my wife next week, paying no attention at all—"

"Not—not next week, Clay. It's the week after."

"That's what I just told you. We'll have to push the date up a bit if I'm to get on the job by Thursday."

"Job? Thursday?" gasped Beth. "In Cumberland?"

"Sure. The territory around that section is mine now, because I got such a fine lot of sales this past week. You'll like it up there. Good mountain air, nice people, cute little movie house. Of course I'll be away lots of the time, so I reckon we'd best board for a while."

"But our house, Clay! With all of the pretty things we've bought—"

He waved his hand carelessly. "That's all settled. A fellow in the office wants it as is. I've about completed the deal. Stung him good and proper, too, asking a cool thousand more than it has cost us! I've been a pretty busy person to-day, Beth. Even stopped long enough for the license—"

"License?" Beth repeated dully.

"For Heaven's sake stop acting like a parrot," Clay growled. "We couldn't get married without one. And as I said, we'll have to make it snappy. Monday noon is the time. Your old man won't care. We'll not have any fixings, which will please Mrs. Manners, I'll say, and then start right off. I called up the minister."

"Our — dear little house," Beth stammered. "My pretty curtains, my rugs, pictures—the kitchen ware that we bought together. Oh, Clay!" She did not add that her money had purchased all these prized things.

"Plenty more where they came from when we get ready to go to housekeeping," he answered carelessly. "I don't think we'll do that, though, for some time. I might be transferred again, you see. Meanwhile, Beth, I've got a proposition to make. How'd you like a new job? I saw a chap who runs a nifty little department store, and spoke of you. He needs clerks the worst way. I thought maybe you'd want to do something to pass your time

while I'm on the road. Nice to have your own money, isn't it? Not be obliged to ask your husband for every dime you spend, eh?" This last was said playfully, but there was a calculating look in his cold gray eyes.

"I—don't care," she answered listlessly. No little home of her very own. Living in a strange town, married, yet toiling day by day for her own money. Never to see Chris again. What was he doing now? Was he hungry, thirsty? Did he miss her?

"Well, you needn't look so downcast," Clay said shortly. "You don't have to take that job unless you want it. Far be it from me to refuse my wife anything she needs. So you'll be ready Monday?"

"I—I'd rather wait until the time we set before, Clay. You could come back for me. I haven't—finished getting my clothes—"

"Bosh! Plenty of clothes where we're going. Monday it is, Beth. I can't be getting off so soon after starting in the new place. Don't you get a thrill out of the fact that day after to-morrow you'll be Mrs. Clayton Henning? I'm awfully proud of you, honey, and I'd like to see anybody come between us. You haven't been running round town with any other man, have you?"

"No! Certainly not." Her voice trembled.

"That's my girl. Come on, let's take in a movie before we go home. Sort of celebrate our last evening as an engaged couple. To-morrow night will have to be quiet. We'll go to church together."

BETH never afterward remembered anything about the show, nor did she hear anything that Clay said on their homeward drive. It was raining when they spun past the Garrett house, and she strained her eyes backward as long as she could see the dim outline of the old mansion. There was a light in the drawing-room; a faint illumination that seeped through the closed blinds. Chris was in there—alone.

Would he care if he knew she was going to be married in less than two days?

She gave herself a sharp jerk. How silly to have such thoughts about a Garrett. He would scarcely remember her a month from now, or if he did, it would be to think of her as a little country girl who had befriended him in his need.

At her door she lifted cold, tightly compressed lips for Clay's good night kiss, reproaching herself as she did so. He was good to her, he loved her. He was taking her from a household where she had been unhappy for over a year. Could she break her promise at this late day? Beth thought wildly. No, it was impossible. She had given her word, and she must keep it, even though her life hereafter would be one of utter misery. For Beth realized now that her heart and soul belonged to another man. To Christopher Garrett!

She did a strange thing when Clay was nearly at the gate. Acting on impulse, she ran after him.

"Wait a minute," she quavered. "Would you mind—very much, if—if I asked you not to come out to-morrow evening? It's the—the last night, and I—have something I want to do—just awfully."

"Why, no, Beth," he answered readily. "Not at all. In fact, I'd like to run around and see some of the fellows. Somebody may give me a blow-out, seeing it's my last night as a

bachelor. See you Monday noon. 'Night."

SUNDAY dragged itself past, an eternity in length. Mrs. Manners plainly showed her relief when Beth announced her sudden change of plans.

"That's a sensible idea," her stepmother said. "No trouble at all, just the ceremony, then off to your new home. I'm glad you arranged it that way."

"Fine," echoed her father, scarcely looking in her direction. "Pity you had to sell your bungalow, though. Hope Clay got a good price for it. You'll like it up Cumberland way."

Beth's lips quivered. How little he cared. He had always been hard—hard as nails, both to her and her own mother. She didn't even answer Helen, when the girl, green-eyed with envy, said sarcastically:

"Catch me ever letting a man sell my things without asking whether I like it or not. I should think you'd have been perfectly furious."

All day long she prayed silently: "Let them go to church to-night, dear Lord. I've got to see him once more—just once, please!"

She had made her plans. If the family followed their regular custom and attended evening services, she'd pack a market basket with every kind of food possible, cross the rear fields and enter the Garrett place through the one-time garden gate. Only to see him again, for the last, last time!

There was a full moon that night, shining high in the heavens. It would lend enough light to steer her over the uneven, plowed ground.

Suppose they didn't go. Oh, if only they did!

At supper it looked as if no one was going. Mrs. Manners complained of a headache, Helen was sulky, and declared she was going directly to bed. Then Ralph came in, filled with news of a regiment of soldiers from Camp Holabird attending church that evening.

"There's a whole passel of 'em," he said excitedly. "All dressed up in uniform. Good lookers, too. Rev. Jones is goin' to give a social afterward, at the parsonage. He says we must come."

Mrs. Manners's headache disappeared as if by magic, and Helen flew upstairs to dress. Beth, when asked by her father if she would go, pleaded packing as an excuse.

"It's my last night at home, daddy," she said wistfully, laying a timid hand on his shoulder. "Will you be sorry to see me go?"

"Sorry?" John Manners stared at her in surprise. "Why should I? You're getting a fine young man and a home of your own. And Cumberland ain't so far off. I'm glad you're marrying as well as you are. Don't act childish, Beth. You're a woman now."

She watched them all drive off in the rickety old sedan, tears shining in her eyes, which she dashed away with the back of her hand. Pride stiffened her shoulders. She told herself she was glad, too, that her wedding day was tomorrow. Nobody cared—no one but Clay. Oh, she'd try to be a good wife to him; try to love him as he deserved.

It was the work of ten minutes to rifle the always well-stocked pantry, fill a basket, slip a dark coat over her white organdie dress, and let herself out of the kitchen door. In another ten minutes she was rapping nervously at the big front doors, letting herself in when no one answered, and racing toward the library.

It was empty, that vast, high-ceil-

inged room. A fire burned on the hearth, there was a chair drawn up before the table, some sheets of paper scattered around, and a fountain pen lying beside them.

Involuntarily, Beth caught sight of the bold script on one page. Evidently just written, as the ink wasn't quite dry. She read two words at the top of the letter, "Dear Judy." The same name that Chris had moaned, over and over, the morning he was delirious. At the bottom of the sheet she saw his name, "Christopher W. Garrett."

Then she drew back quickly, a hot flush rising in her cheeks. How rude to look at another person's correspondence!

SOME one was limping down the stairs. Beth heard the thump, thump of a heavy stick, and turned to the door. Chris saw her at that moment, and hastened toward her as well as his still swollen foot would permit. He dropped the cane when he neared her; held out both hands.

"You blessed little saint!" he cried. "Did you hear me calling, begging for another sight of the sweetest, prettiest girl in the State of Maryland? Who says there's nothing in mental telepathy?" he scoffed, drawing her closer to him. "I've been sending wireless messages over your way ever since last night."

Beth gave a shaky little laugh and drew away from him.

"I was worried about you," she told him. "I've brought a whole lot of things—a ham, chicken, bread, and—"

"And something a million times more needed, Bethie. Your own darling self. Why, you're cold, dear. Your hand is icy." He had caught it again, and was holding tightly to it. She was so close to him that she could hear the quick beating of his heart. And in that instant a glorious rapture seemed to envelop her. Every nerve in her body was responding to that pressure of her fingers, from which some magic current issued. A golden mist enveloped her, and through its dazzling haze Chris's voice vibrated with a new intensity:

"My sweet little Beth. I knew you'd come. You couldn't stay away, could you? You see, it's my last night here for a while—only a week or so, though. I've got to go to New York in the morning. Had a telegram—"

"A telegram—here?" she broke in, trying to release herself from that firm hold. "I thought you said no one knew where you were?"

"My brother knew," he smiled. "I think the messenger was afraid to rap at the door. He certainly held his breath while I signed for it. But never mind that, dear. We've other and more important things to talk about. You, for instance. I love you, Beth. Can't you read it in every line of my face? Look at me, darling!"

Their eyes met. Brown eyes, boyish, eager, tense. Blue eyes, filled with horror, despair, anguish. Great, glistening tears in them. Pallid lips parted, chin quivering. Beth jerked away from him, holding him off with outstretched palms.

"No—no, you can't—you don't mean—that!" she panted. "*Please*—you mustn't—say such things to me. I'm—just a girl who's tried to—do—things for you, and—"

"Do things for me, Beth? You have done more to me than you know, dearest. You've won me, body and soul, for keeps. I couldn't go away without letting you know, darling. I want you. Don't you care, just a little? If you do, Beth, I can teach

you what love is. Come with me tomorrow. We'll go to New York and take the first liner for Europe. I'll show you the world, England, France, Italy—everywhere you want to go. Will you go with me? Then we'll come back here some day, where I found the one girl of my dreams, make this old home into a paradise, and—"

"Oh, Chris, don't say any—more," she moaned, beating the air with both little clenched fists. "You—don't know, and I—I can't tell you—"

"Tell me what, sweetheart? Nothing you could ever say would change me. I *love* you! You're something I've never had—a wonder girl that I've dreamed of. All my life I've been starved for love, darling, and when you came, sweet, precious, belonging to no one, not happy in your home—"

"But I do," she jerked out, terror in her eyes. "I do—belong to—another man, Chris. We—we are going—going to be married at noon—tomorrow." Her voice died out in a pitiful wail.

A LONG, miserable silence. Chris stared at her without speaking. All the eagerness was gone from his eyes which now looked shadowed, strained. His lips were set in a taut line, the muscles of his jaw worked convulsively. At last he muttered hoarsely:

"I apologize. I — couldn't know; you've never spoken of—of the luckiest man on earth. This, then, was a good-by visit?"

"Y-e-s," she murmured miserably. "It—it's—good-by for—all time. I—I'm leaving this part of—the State. Good-by."

She dashed past him, not daring to meet his gaze again. Her very soul was in travail. Her fingers fumbled for the knob of the hall door, too shaky to find it. He limped behind her, gravely opening the door for her, following her out on the brick court.

"Beth," he whispered, "just one little favor before we part, dear. It's going to be a long, dreary life without you, dream girl. Won't you let me kiss you once? Only once, Beth." He was pleading as a man might have done for his very life.

She turned. With a dry little sob she raised her tear-wet face. Chris caught her to him, the cane dropped to the bricks with a loud clatter, his arms held her close—close, and his lips sought hers. They clung together, those two who loved with all the strength of their beings, for a long, exquisite moment . . .

Suddenly, there was a blinding flash, a deafening report. The shadowy garden was lighted up for a brief instant, and Christopher Garrett's arms dropped from the girl. Both faced in the direction of the gate just as another flash occurred.

Some one near the fountain laughed. There was a scurrying of feet. The big iron gates clanged together, then dead silence.

"What was it?" Beth gasped, turning to Chris. "Somebody was—watching us. Who could it—be?"

"Lord knows," he answered hoarsely. "I'm afraid I've put you in a false position, Beth, and I swear I wouldn't have hurt you for the world itself. That was a flash-light machine, taking pictures of us. The news reporters—they've been on my track for over a week. You must go, dear. Is there any other way except the road—"

"Yes, the fields," she said shakily. "I—came that way. I'll go back—"

"Go now. At once!" he cut in huskily. "Beth, can you remember an

address? Then listen. If anything happens—if you're called to account by—your family—the man you are going to marry, telegraph me and I'll come back at once and explain. The Somerset Club, on Fifty-Ninth Street, New York. Remember that?"

She nodded. He could see her white face in the moonlight that filtered through the tall cedars. She looked so young, so pitifully frightened. It couldn't be anything but fright, he told himself. She didn't care for him; she would be another man's wife to-morrow.

"Don't feel too badly about me, Beth," he whispered. "I—just came too late, that's all. Good-by, my little white saint—my lost love. To my dying day—throughout eternity—I'll remember and love you . . ."

Over the plowed, moon-swept fields she ran, stumbling, falling, rising again. Chris loved her! She worshipped him! Oh, why had he come too late? To-morrow she would be Clayton Henning's wife, and another man's burning kiss was still warm on her lips.

It was too late to retract. Too late to tell Clay of this new, wild love that shook her from head to foot. No, she must go on. There was no turning back now. She was bound. Honor held her in iron bonds . . .

"Hey, Beth! Wait a minute, won't you?" A loud, youthful voice was calling her name. Ralph Wade came running up behind her, reaching her side as she halted. She could see the meaning grin on his broad, freckled face.

"I got the low-down on you, all right," he cackled. "It was you a-singin' in that old Garrett house the other night. You've been sneakin' in there to see that lame man, ain't you? No use to lie about it. Me and Bob Taylor follered you to-night. We been hangin' round peekin' in the windows all day long, and seen him good. Jehoshaphat! Won't there be a sweet old row when the folks hear what I seen?" His coarse laugh echoed over the quiet scene.

All her life Beth would remember that awful moment. Far off an owl hooted, a cow lowed in the barn. The crisp breeze of an October night swept her fiery cheeks. The very ground under her feet seemed shaking, swaying. She caught the top bar of the pasture fence to steady herself.

Suddenly, terror sent a peculiar calm over her. Her palsied lips opened. She stared down at the grinning, fifteen-year-old boy.

"Ralph," she began desperately, "I've been helping a man who was ill and couldn't do anything for himself. He got caught in that heavy trap you set in the Garrett grounds, a week ago. He—he doesn't want any one to know where he is. You'll help me keep his secret, won't you? Say you will. Please, Ralph!"

"Secret, huh? Reckon he won't have no secrets any more. Them men took your pictures to-night. We was right there by the fountain, and seen everything, me and Bob. Gosh, I never had so much fun in my life. Him a-holdin' you in his arms, kissin' you, tee, hee! Gee, won't Clay Henning stand on his ear when he hears what—"

"Ralph, please listen," she begged wildly. "I don't care about myself, but he—the man at the Garrett house—doesn't want it known that he's there. I'm going to tell Clay everything, anyway, after we are—after to-morrow. If you will not say anything about it until after I—am married, I'll give

you five dollars." She hated herself for offering the boy a bribe, but said under her breath: "It's not for me—it's for Chris, for Chris."

"Where's the money?" Ralph asked shrewdly. "Hand it over. I'll keep mum."

"Come in the house. I have it in my room." She moved away unsteadily, the boy following closely. In a few moments Ralph had the bill clutched in his grubby fingers and Beth closed her door on him, falling in a pathetic little heap across her bed.

SHE could never remember how that night was spent. Strange though it was, after hours of mental anguish such as few have ever borne, Beth fell into a heavy sleep, induced by sheer exhaustion. She did not know when Helen came in. Troubled dreams were hers that night. Chris was the central figure of those wild fantasies. He was being pursued by an army of enemies, and she, beside him, was imploring him to tell her his secret.

"They shall not hurt you!" she cried aloud. "I'll keep them off, Chris!"

Then she awakened to find the sun streaming through her window. She glanced across at the other single bed. It was empty. Helen, who seldom arose before nine o'clock, was already up and out of the room.

Beth dressed hastily, her fingers so shaky that she could scarcely put on the simple blue tweed suit in which she would be married. She packed a suitcase before going down to breakfast, giving a hasty glance at her trunk, strapped and ready to go. In four hours she would no longer be Beth Manners, but Mrs. Clayton Henning. Oh, the ache of her heart at the thought. What a wicked girl she was. Clay loved her; he had always been kind to her, but he wasn't—Chris . . .

MRS. MANNERS gave her a curious glance as she entered the kitchen, but went on with her work at the range. Beth broke the uncomfortable silence.

"Where's Helen and daddy?" she asked.

"I don't know," was the short reply. "I think your father's gone with the sheriff somewhere. Helen was up and out of the house by six o'clock."

"Gone with the—sheriff?" Beth stammered. "Anything—wrong?"

"Might be," noncommittally. "Funny doings up to the Garrett place. Know anything about it?" She gave the white-faced girl a keen scrutiny.

"How—could I?" Beth murmured.

"That remains to be seen." Mrs. Manners laughed harshly. "Get your own coffee and rolls, I've had mine, and the others can wait on themselves when they come in—here's your father now."

John Manners entered the kitchen door at that moment, with a paper in his hand. His penetrating blue eyes, beneath their bushy gray eyebrows, were fixed sternly on the girl in front of him. Ralph, with a malicious grin on his sallow face, was directly behind the man.

Beth was pouring out her coffee, but almost dropped the cup when her father's harsh voice bellowed her name.

"Come in the dining room, Beth," he yelled, catching her arm in cruel fingers. "I've got something to say to you, my girl."

She faced him bravely. But she wasn't prepared for what she saw on the front sheet of the morning paper, which he held before her.

"Look at this!" shouted the angry man, pointing to a particularly clear picture. It was a photograph of a man and a girl, standing in a shadowy court, locked in each other's arms. Beth and Chris.

Above the picture was one sentence that burned itself into Beth's dazed brain:

"C. Weems Garrett Located at His Grandfather's Old Home. Unknown Woman with Him." She read no more.

"Unknown woman," snarled her father. "It was you, my own daughter! Sneaking in that house and holding meetings with the dirty skunk. He's gone. Lit out because he was guilty. Don't try to explain anything to me! Ralph told me what you admitted to him last night. Taking food to a dirty scoundrel who has been hiding from the law. A gambler, a roué, and you, my girl, in this man's arms! Here it is, black on white, sprawled all over the paper for everybody to see. To-day your wedding day, too! What you think Clayton Henning is going to say—"

"Clay knows already," piped a thin, triumphant voice, as Helen Wade, in street clothes and hat, entered the room. "I went into the city on the six o'clock bus and told him everything. Ralph gave me the story last night. I couldn't sleep in the same room with her."

She pointed a scornful finger at the hollow-eyed girl who was gazing speechlessly at her.

"You needn't fix for a marriage," Helen went on. "I couldn't let a nice boy like Clay be fooled, and he's seen the paper to prove all I said. He's not coming at all, Father Manners," she told the purple-faced man. "He sent you this note to explain."

John Manners scanned the three curt lines, then threw it at Beth. "There, read it for yourself. He's jilted you. He tells me he couldn't think of giving a girl like you his good name, and God knows I can't hold it against him. Get out of my house! Ralph, run bring down this girl's suitcase. I won't stand for having you pollute my home a minute longer. Go!" He pointed to the door.

Beth fought down the lethargy that chained her. She ran to her father, catching his arms in tense little fingers.

"Daddy, listen!" she implored, tears raining down her cheeks. "You don't understand. I only tried to—help—help Mr. Garrett, because he didn't want anybody to know where he—was. Please—won't you let me explain—"

"You can't explain this!" John Manners stormed, striking the paper with his clenched fist. "In the arms of the contemptible dog. Like father, like son. The other Christopher Garrett broke his daddy's heart, and this one is worse. A gambler—a criminal hiding from justice—"

"I don't believe it!" Beth cried passionately. "He's clean, honorable—scarcely more than a boy, and he told me—"

"No more from you," raged her father, pushing her toward the door with rough, horny hands. "Here's Ralph with your bag. I'll send you the rest of your things. Get out this minute, and never dare cross my threshold while you live. I'm disgraced. A Manners—disgraced. Go!"

Beth looked back once. Mrs. Manners had her arm around the bowed shoulders of her husband; Helen was on his other side. She shot a malignant glance at Beth, then turned her

head. And then Beth closed the door of her home behind her forever.

WHERE was she to go? What must she do? She asked herself these questions many times that morning while wandering around the busy city, afraid to venture near Lane's Dress Shop. Every one there had seen the papers, would recognize her. She shuddered to recall how clearly her features had been outlined on that front sheet.

Chris. He had gone. What had her father said about him being accused of some crime? Should she buy a paper and read it?

"I—couldn't stand seeing it again," Beth whispered. "I don't believe anything they say against him. He's good and clean and honest. He—loves me, too—"

This last thought sent a thrill through her. Chris loved her! And he'd gone away thinking she was marrying another man that morning. He had looked so broken hearted when she told him. Why, Chris wanted her! Beth stopped still in the street as this tremendous truth assailed her. His address—it was burned into her brain in letters of fire. Why not go to him and let him know she was free? That she belonged to him while life should last? He had told her to wire him if anything happened, but to go directly to him—to his arms—oh, the very thought was ecstasy almost too great to bear.

In her purse was twenty-five dollars, her last week's salary. She did not hesitate another moment, but leaped on the first bus headed for the station. There was a train for New York leaving in ten minutes. When it pulled out of the shed, Beth was on it.

Throughout the four and a half hour journey she gave herself up to dreams. She thought of Clay, who had professed such deep affection and sympathy for her, yet had thrown her aside without giving her any opportunity to explain. Not a pang was hers at his desertion. She knew now that she had never cared for Clayton Henning, and a prayer of thanksgiving welled in her overflowing heart for her release from bondage. Everything happened for the best, after all. Even the stigma on her name would soon be wiped out. Chris would take her back to his old home as his wife, and even her father would be sorry for all he had said and done.

The enormous Pennsylvania Station bewildered the girl, who had never before visited the big city, but a kindly porter took her bag and led her to a waiting taxi. Tremulously she gave the chauffeur the name of Chris's club, and the next minute she was being whirled through a maze of traffic, headed northward. Beth sat very rigid, hands locked tightly together, nerves tense, muscles taut. Suppose she did not find Chris. Suppose he had arrived by an earlier train, but hadn't meant what he'd said the night before?

"Oh, he did, he did!" she murmured fiercely. "He—kissed me as no one could who didn't care—terribly . . ."

"Somerset Club, miss," announced the driver, drawing up before a tall, grim, brownstone building.

Beth got out and paid the man, took her suitcase and went up the steep stone steps. A uniformed attendant opened the doors, staring at her curiously. Beth wondered if her face was smoke-grimed, and nervously brushed it with her handkerchief.

"Is—is Mr. Garrett here?" she asked timidly. "He—gave me this address."

"Mr. C. W. Garrett?" queried the blank-eyed servant.

She nodded, choking down a lump in her throat.

"I'll see; wait a moment, please." The man disappeared, consulted a forbidding looking person behind a desk, then came back to her.

"Mr. Garrett arrived this noon, miss. Will you give me your name, please?"

She told him who she was, and he ushered her into a darkened, vacant waiting room, then disappeared. Scarcely two minutes elapsed before Beth heard rapid footsteps in the corridor. Some one threw back the velvet draperies and rushed in. It was Chris!

"Beth!" he cried, covering the distance between them in two bounds. "What is it, dear? Has something happened? Tell me!"

AND then the tension around her heart broke. She covered her face with both hands and burst into hysterical weeping. Chris knelt beside her, his arm around her shoulders, his tender voice begging her to explain. It soothed her, that fresh, vibrant voice. She fought hard for composure, and finally told him everything, in jerky, broken sentences.

"Did you care so much for him, Beth?" he asked softly, when she told of Clayton Henning's cruel desertion.

"No, never!" was the emphatic reply. "I know now that I—I didn't care from the beginning, Chris. I found that out when—"

"When?" he prompted, a tremor in his tones. "Beth, don't put me off, darling. I can't help but believe you do care a little for me, else you'd not be here. Was that why you came? Look at me!"

She looked, and he read her answer. There was no need for words. In that quiet room, with its drawn blinds and ruddy coal fire, two young hearts beat happily, close together, for a long, glorious moment.

"I can't believe it," Chris said at last, his lips caressing her cheeks, her eyes, then resting on her mouth. "My Beth! Last night, darling, the whole world was going to pieces for me. To-day—this afternoon, I'm the happiest man on earth. And you are going to be mine, my own, forever? Tell me you are, sweetheart! Let me hear you say so."

"All my life, forever and ever," she said, eyes shining, voice quavering. "If—if you want me," she added in a whisper.

"If I want you! Only the Lord knows, Beth, how I *do* want you. Say, darling, it's after five, and you can't stay here. Wait in this room while I run back to my apartment and grab a few things, then I'm going to take you out to Long Island, to a friend of mine. You'll stay there to-night, then to-morrow we'll—but I'll tell you our plans on our drive. I won't be more than ten minutes, sweetheart. Beth, kiss me! You precious! Back in a jiff, little white saint."

Beth moved about the reading room, too wildly excited to sit still. What a happy termination to a day which had begun so miserably. After all the shame and humiliation at home, to come to New York and find Chris so easily. And he loved her! He, too, was happy. How his dear eyes had shone into hers, revealing nothing but devotion. Oh, God had meant them for one another all along—

She paused beside the little table and picked up the afternoon paper. Two heads on the back page caught her eye. One was a beautiful girl in gorgeous

evening gown, and the other, a man, looked like—Chris!

Beneath was the caption: "Mr. and Mrs. C. Winfield Garrett, at the time of their marriage, a year ago. Mrs. Garrett, formerly Judy Chandler, of Boston, emphatically denies the report that she is about to divorce her husband—"

The big room whirled around. Beth's eyes were glued to that little item, to those faces. It was Chris! And the woman was his—wife! Chris, who had just sworn he loved *her*, wanted her—no, he had not asked her to marry him. Oh, dear God, give her strength to get away before he returned. It would kill her to see his handsome, boyish face again.

"Mr. Garrett wishes me to say he is talking over long distance, miss," said a voice from the doorway. "He will join you in a short while."

Beth lifted strained, tortured eyes to the face of the attendant who had admitted her into the club. She fought for strength to speak, then managed to say:

"Tell Mr. Garrett that I have seen the afternoon paper, and there's no use for me to wait any longer."

She picked up her suitcase and ran past the man. She was gone before he could make any reply.

IT was two and a half months later. Christopher Garrett was spending a lonely evening in his lonely rooms at the club. Despite the search of the best detectives to be found, and hundreds of personals in all the papers, not a trace of Beth had been unearthed.

When he had rushed back that afternoon, regardless of his still lame foot, expecting to find her waiting, the porter had delivered her queer message.

"The young lady looked ill, sir," the man told Chris. "She said she'd seen the paper, and there wasn't any use for her to wait."

Chris jerked up the paper lying there crumpled from the crushing of Beth's little hands. He read the item she had seen, and groaned aloud. Of course she had misunderstood. Why hadn't he told her long ago?

He dashed out of the club and spent the whole night searching for her. But she had disappeared as if the earth had swallowed her, leaving him desolate, distracted, and, as the weeks rolled on, hopeless.

He fingered his mail listlessly, a frown contracting his broad, white forehead as he caught sight of a familiar script on an envelope with a foreign stamp. The signature was "Your devoted Judy."

> I do hope, dear old Chris, that you've located your missing sweetheart by the time this reaches you. Winfield and I are always talking about you, loving you to death for the wonderful way you acted when he was in such a mess. You'd be surprised, Chris, at the change in old Win, since we came to Italy. He absolutely refused to stop over at Monte Carlo, and I certainly didn't insist. Oh, he's completely cured now. Can't even get him to play bridge. But, Chris, dear, if you hadn't thrown the police off Win's track that night, two months ago, things would have been perfectly terrible so far as my dad is concerned. He'd never have forgiven my old boy, if they had caught him, after that tragedy in the night club. You're sweet and darling, buddy, and we are praying hard that happiness will be yours very soon. Surely the girl saw the papers right along, and understood. Get married right away, and come join us. It's gorgeous here now. Lots of love from both Win and your devoted Judy.

Chris laid the scrawled page on his desk and got to his feet.

"Darn that radio!" he said angrily. The instrument belonged to an acquaintance who had the adjoining room, and it was going all the time.

He jerked on his overcoat and reached for his hat. He'd go out. Anywhere to get away from the infernal noise, he told himself. But he had scarcely reached his door when a sound brought him to a standstill. The raucous music had stopped, and a woman was singing. A woman who possessed a sweet contralto voice. What was that song? Where had he heard it before? The words came over the air, clear and strong, with a plaintive, poignancy:

"I'd rather have the thought of you
To hold against my heart,
My spirit to be taught of you
With west winds blowing,
Than all the warm caresses
Of another love's bestowing,
Or all the glories of the world
In which you had no part—"

The singer was Beth! There could be no doubt of it. That voice—that song— The next instant Chris was bursting into the adjoining room, astounding its occupant, a stout, red-faced young man, by his excited cry:

"What station is that, Wilson? Answer, quick!"

Wilson told him, adding cheerily: "Nice voice, that girl, eh? She sings every Thursday evening—" He broke off, for Chris was gone, leaving the door wide open.

CHRIS didn't wait for the elevator, but dashed down the four flights of stairs, out into the street, hailing the taxi that was waiting at the curb. The driver's protest that he had a customer availed nothing.

"I'll pay you double your fare—treble, if you ask it. Get me where I want to go within five minutes, and you shall have fifty dollars. Step on it!"

Beth in the same city with him all this time . . . Beth singing that same song she'd sung for him . . . Within reach of him—just a mile between them.

Fortunately there was little traffic on the street which the delighted chauffeur selected, and within a few moments of his allotted time, they drew up before the broadcasting building. Thrusting the promised bill at the driver, Chris rushed inside, hopped into an ascending elevator, and got off at the designated floor.

He spied a man coming out of a room and hailed him.

"The young lady who was singing here a short while ago," he asked breathlessly; "where is she?"

The man regarded his questioner in surprise. "Which one?" he asked. "There have been several on the program."

Chris gave him an exasperated look. Why couldn't the idiot know that there was only one girl's voice in the world worth listening to! He opened his lips to retort sharply, then stopped short.

A slim, girlish figure, dressed in black, was emerging from a door at the end of the corridor. It was Beth!

He ran to her, caught both her hands. His own were shaking like those of a palsied person.

"Thank God I've found you!" he breathed hoarsely. "I've searched day and night, darling, since you ran away and left me so cruelly—"

"Cruelly?" She gave him a scornful glance. "You were the cruel one, I should say. Why aren't you with your wife—with Judy?"

"Because Judy is my brother's wife,

sweetheart," Chris said solemnly. "Charles Winfield Garrett, called Winfield after my grandfather. I am Christopher Weems Garrett, and we have often had our names confused, having the same initials. Listen, Beth: Winfield was wild. He gambled, drank, and raised the dickens generally a few months ago. There was a fight in a road house, and a man was killed. They wanted Win for a witness, and he couldn't afford to let his wife's relatives hear about it. I had no ties. I helped him out by claiming it was I who saw the murder, and then skipped out of town. Judy and he were having trouble at the time—thinking of separating. But it has all blown over now. They are in Europe, and I—I have been here alone, hunting you. Do you believe me now, dear?"

There was no hesitation any longer. Beth's heartshaped face bore a transfigured expression, as she lifted her arms and encircled his neck.

"Oh, I've — missed you — so terribly, Chris," she quavered. "And now we are together again—"

"Until death parts us, and then throughout eternity," he breathed passionately, his lips on hers. "Never again will I let you out of my sight. You'll marry me to-morrow, darling? Say you will!"

"Yes," she whispered happily. "And then we'll go back and make the old house over, won't we, Chris?"

"You bet!" he cried boyishly. "And make everybody apologize for the way they treated my wife. You'll see. Tell me something, Beth. You know what I want to hear you say, don't you?"

"I love you, love you, Chris," she breathed, her lips on his. "And I am the happiest girl in the whole world to-night."

Detour to Paradise

"Straight Ahead," the signpost of duty pointed. "Stop!" warned her heart. But where was the road to love?

"Say it, Janet, say it!"

By Florence Stuart

"THREE grand!" boasted Jack Hilliard. "All for the taking." He flipped one of the gold pieces with which his pockets were filled. "Always was lucky at roulette. But three grand in one morning—" He looked at one of the two girls in their party, the younger one with the drooping hat and the gorgeous brown eyes. "Do you realize what it means, kid?" he asked.

But Janet King's eyes were flashing; and her pretty mouth was set in a tight little line. "I realize perfectly well what it means, Jack. But I'm not sure that you do." Her voice was crisp and cool. "It means that our engagement is off. For good, this time."

Quickly she slipped a flashing ring from her engagement finger and laid it on the table between them. It glittered impishly. The other man and girl sat wordless, watching, while Jack's eyes darkened sullenly and he began to protest.

Oh, yes, he knew perfectly well

Google

Janet's ideas about gambling. He hadn't forgotten that twice in the past she had threatened to break off with him because of it. That time almost two years ago when he had been expelled from Cornell for piling up a huge debt in a poker game. And again last spring when he had gone broke playing the ponies down in Kentucky.

But both of those times he had lost. Fatuously he had told himself that the results had been what prejudiced Janet's viewpoint; that if all had gone well and he had won instead of losing, she would have been more reasonable.

At least, that is what he had told himself this morning when the four of them landed in Agua Cagliente, where the tense atmosphere of the gambling room waited seductively.

"AW, don't be a wet smack and spoil the party," he began, frowning at Janet. "You certainly don't mean—"

The other girl, his sister, interrupted. "My Lord, Janet, you're acting like a regular prude. Fancy a man coming to Cagliente and not gambling. Why, that's what Americans come to Mexico for." She looked at Janet across the small luncheon table, in the patio of Mexico's famous gambling resort.

"Here seems to be one man who didn't come for that." Janet smiled toward Guy Marshall, the other man of the party.

"Oh, well, Guy doesn't need to. He has half the money in the world to start with, besides all of the cardinal virtues and none of the vices." Renée Hilliard's remarks were always a bit extravagant where they concerned Guy. Clearly, she was trying to impress him. And had been trying, with indefatigable persistence, ever since he had returned from two years of globe-trotting and settled down in the house next hers in San Diego.

"Anyway, it's very poor taste of you to make a scene."

"I'm not making a scene," declared Janet sharply. "It's simply that I will not go on one minute pretending to be engaged to Jack when I'm through. All of you would know it presently. So it might as well be now."

Renée leaned across the table toward Janet. She was a woman with traces of real beauty in her face. But it was a hard face, and it was the strained, slightly faded blonde beauty of thirty-five trying to look twenty.

"You're being a prude, Janet," she repeated. On the surface her tone was light, her lips smiling. But there was an indefinable undercurrent of something neither light nor smiling. "Your mind is filled with a lot of out-of-date Sunday school ideas about what people ought and oughtn't to do. And you must get over them. Be modern. Up-to-date. I've half a notion you're just using this as an excuse to get out of marrying Jack, anyway. I believe you're afraid to adventure into marriage."

She laughed lightly. There was something about that laugh calculated to arouse Janet's anger, to sting her pride.

Those gorgeous dark eyes flashed dangerously as the girl looked the older woman straight in the eye. "You know you don't mean that. You're just trying to hurt me, although I can't see why. But I'll show you if it's that I'm afraid of marriage. I'll marry the very first man who asks me, just so he isn't a gambling fiend!"

There was a brief, charged silence. Then Guy Marshall's voice, deep, resonant: "How about me, Janet?"

Three pairs of eyes stared at Guy: Jack's scowling, Renée's horribly startled, Janet's incredulous. "Oh, you're kidding me. You don't mean that."

"Of course I mean it. Why shouldn't I mean it? Do I seem the sort of man who scatters proposals of marriage around helter-skelter without meaning them?"

"Aw, you wouldn't do. She probably wouldn't like the cut of your hair." Jack was being deliberately nasty.

Janet glanced at him with narrowed eyes. Then she turned to Renée, who couldn't keep from her face the partial reflection of what she was thinking. It was there, almost as clearly as if she had spoken. If this little brat dared attach Guy Marshall, after she had been scheming to land him for herself all these weeks—

Janet turned back to Guy, smiled, and said very quietly, "If you really mean it, I'm game."

It was done on impulse, of course. She realized it was just a joke. A dramatic gesture Guy had offered to help her out of an awkward situation.

And so Janet was somewhat bewildered when Guy reached in a vest pocket and drew out a small box. Inside lay a gold, oval locket, the face of it edged with pearls, surrounding the hand-painted miniature of a beautiful lady. It was hung on a thin gold chain.

"This," said Guy, holding it up in his hand, "is the likeness of my mother. For that reason I treasure the locket. She wore it. Even though it is only a trinket, I value it more than any possession I have, and I have always planned to give it to my *fiancée*."

He rose and went around the table to Janet. "You will let me fasten it on?"

Janet looked up at him, flushing deeply. She smiled, and her lips were unsteady. "I'll love wearing it," she managed to tell him, wondering why she felt so strangely moved and excited when, after all, it was just a farce they were playing out. To-night she would return the locket, of course.

Nevertheless, when they left the luncheon table half an hour later, there was a queer, excited light in the depths of Janet's eyes that had not been there when she came. And when Guy touched her arm to steer her through the crowd surrounding the doorway, she felt absurdly thrilled.

BUT, thrill or no thrill, it was just an afternoon's farce, Janet told herself late that evening as she perched on the edge of her open trunk, beginning to pack things. For she felt that now the sooner she left Renée's home, the better. She never should have come, that was the answer. And never should have kidded herself into believing, once she discovered that Jack gambled, that promises to any girl were going to change him. Men didn't change.

Norton Keyes, back in New York (Janet's guardian under her grandfather's will), had tried to advise her. "An attractive enough fellow," he had said of Jack, "but do you think he has a lot to him?"

But on that point Janet had hastened to try to reassure him. Carried away by Jack's good looks and the romantic love-making of a swank Cornell athlete who drove a ritzy sport car and wore imported tweeds with a swagger, Janet was able easily to imagine all the other excellent qualities desirable in a man, and attribute these to him. She insisted that her guardian had not seen Jack at his best.

Norton Keyes wasn't convinced. If Janet persisted in going on with this engagement, he supposed he should, as guardian, go out to California and find out what he could about Jack's family. Lots of fly-by-nights living in California and putting up a temporary splurge, with not a thing behind them, so Keyes had heard.

Still, he was no longer a young man. And in the last couple of years his heart had gone weak on him. The doctor had warned him to avoid any unnecessary exertion. Girls managed to look out for themselves these days, anyway. He supposed nothing very disastrous could happen to Janet. If she married the fellow, and he turned out a bounder, Keyes could tie her money up so that Jack couldn't get his hands on it. That would take care of matters.

Besides, he was sure Janet wouldn't marry until she was convinced Jack had given up gambling. Babyhood in a home wherein all sorts of wretchedness existed on account of a gambling-fiend of a father had taught Janet plenty. You didn't forget the impressions that came to you in those formative years.

Janet slid from the edge of the trunk, and went to the dressing table to gather up odds and ends. Why couldn't she have had sense enough to realize, when Renée wrote inviting her to come West and visit her, that it wasn't the thing to do?

Janet regarded Norton Keyes as a blessed old dear, but a bit of an old fogey. And Renée's invitation had sounded so alluring. She was anxious to meet Jack's sister.

And then—"I have just taken the dearest house," wrote Renée. "On the outskirts of San Diego, close by the sea. You can swim and ride every day of your life. A charming man, just back from South America — a bachelor—has moved into the adjoining house. I'm sure he can be persuaded to serve as a necessary fourth on lots of trips we can take. My aunt is living with us, so you'll be all properly chaperoned. And Jack is expecting you—"

Yes, it had sounded as intriguing as the trip of *Alice* to Wonderland.

NOW it was over. The one thing that amazed her was that giving up Jack was proving to be such an easy job. Why, she scarcely felt sorry. Indeed, she felt like singing. She caught herself whistling, and stopped. Was that done, when one had just given up the one and only forever? Or was hers one of those light, cold natures?

One funny thing—she didn't feel a bit light or cold when she fingered that locket about her neck and thought of Guy.

She must return that to-night, she reminded herself.

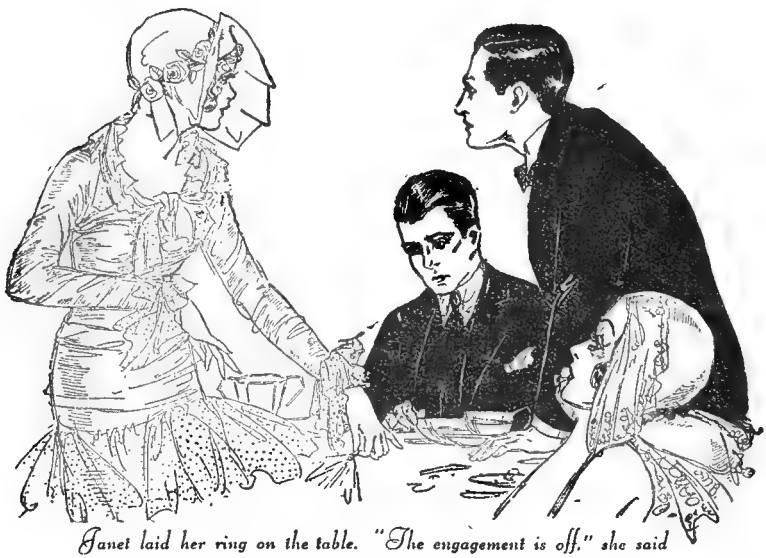
The door opened suddenly and Renée entered. To Janet's astonishment, her manner was warm and friendly. Very different from her attitude this afternoon.

"How about bridge to-morrow night with the Morrisons, Jan?" and she dropped with an attitude of intimate weariness on the side of the single bed. "They just called up—"

"I don't expect to be here to-morrow night." Janet's tone was friendly enough, but firm. "After all that has happened, I think the sooner I go, the better for everybody concerned. In fact, I was coming down stairs in a few minutes to call up about reservations."

"Oh, come now, Jan old dear."

Renée's tone was wheedling. "Don't go spoiling everything just because you and Jack can't hit it off. You don't need to be engaged to him for us to go on all the parties we've planned, do you? Think of the good times you'll spoil for all of us if you go now. You know how we've been looking forward to that motor trip to the desert. And—oh, come on, Jan, be a sport. Stay a while. Please."



Janet laid her ring on the table. "The engagement is off," she said

Janet hesitated, as she ran a comb through her thick golden hair. "But somehow — it doesn't seem like the thing, Renée. It's—well, everything is changed now. And you and Jack are both a little sore at me. And I just don't seem to belong here."

"I'm not sore at you, dearie. And as for Jack—well, after all, he loved you. So you can't expect him to be exactly happy over things. But he'll act decent about it—I promise you that. Please, Janet—say you'll stay a week or so longer, at least."

"Well—perhaps."

And so it was settled. But Janet couldn't help being puzzled over the marked change in Renée. A couple of hours before, it had been as if she didn't care how hateful she acted toward Janet. And now no one could be lovelier. It *was* queer.

THEY were dancing. Janet was floating in Guy Marshall's arms when he suggested going out on the front terrace for a bit of air.

It was a crisp, gorgeous night. Above arched the starry, California sky, reaching down to meet the water line in the distance. Across the bay which spread out before them loomed the shadowy lines of the city, lighted by hundreds of scintillating lights. The sweet fragrance of roses and fruit

blossoms drifted down upon them. It was chilly, and Janet in her fragile yellow dress shivered involuntarily. Guy put his arm about her, drawing her close as if to shield her from the night air.

They wandered the length of the garden, which ran down toward the bay. When they came to the small gate, they stopped.

The next moment Guy had both arms about her, had turned her so that she must face him, had tilted up her chin so that her eyes must meet his. A thrill shot through her as she felt his hands touching her, as she caught a glimpse of the thing that was written in his eyes.

"Little girl, was it just make-believe with you? Or did you by any chance mean it?"

Janet felt her face flood with color. Her eyes fell, she dared not let him see their sudden light. Her voice faltered as she answered: "But it was just make-believe with you, wasn't it?"

He shook his head. "It is not make-believe when I say that I love you, that I have loved you since the day we met a week ago. Oh, I know it sounds like madness. But these things do happen, in real life as well as in fiction, Janet. People do meet who arouse a flame of love and longing and a sense of need in each other in the very first hour. Call it love at first sight or anything else you will. That is what happened to me. I was not free to tell you while you were engaged to Jack. But to-day—well, you can judge for yourself if I wasted much time."

He smiled down at her. Even in the starlight, the warm tenderness in his fine eyes was plainly visible. It thrilled her, and aroused a queer sense of happiness.

She let her eyes meet his. And then—she was suddenly close in his arms, his lips pressed hot against hers.

"Oh, my dear—my dearest—" he was murmuring. "I do love you. Won't you tell me that you love me—if you can? Won't you do that?"

She drew away, while he waited in hushed expectancy. Presently she said softly, "How can I tell? For a year, for two years, I have believed that I loved Jack. Now, suddenly, that is gone. And you have come. Perhaps I believe that I care for you. But how can I know? Can love switch from one to another overnight? Could I love him yesterday, and you to-day? Or am I one of those light, shallow women, incapable of deep love for any one? How can I be sure?"

Guy's tall, lean figure towered above her there in the shadows. He looked down at her, smoothing her hair gently. Shook his head slowly. "If it is real love, Janet, there will come an hour when you will have no doubt. Every atom in your being will cry out, '*This is love.*' And you will know—"

"And when I do," she replied softly, her eyes shining into his, "I will come to you and say: 'I love you.'"

"That is a promise?"

"It is a promise."

"And meanwhile, because I want you to, you will wear the locket I have given you as a pledge of that promise?"

He put both arms around her again, drew her lips closer to him, then leaned over to touch her forehead with his lips.

Again that warm thrill shooting through her body. So pleasurable, yet like pain.

She was still in his arms when Renée appeared on the stone porch above the terrace. Even in the shad-

owy half-light Janet could see her face dark with anger and jealousy.

"WHAT are you doing up at this time?" demanded Janet of Jack. "Never saw you playing the early bird before."

It was Saturday morning, but a little past daybreak. Janet was waiting on the front terrace for Guy. They had planned an early, cross-country ride.

"Listen, Janet." Jack came close to her, and his tone was coaxing. "Do me a favor, won't you? You've let me down pretty raw on this whole deal. Now make one concession."

"Well, what is it, old dear?" She was half laughing and wondering what on earth could be important enough to get Jack up at daybreak.

Sketchily, Jack told her about an old college chum who for adventure and experience was acting as captain on an old freighter for the next year or so. His father had been a sea-captain, and he had it in his blood. He was anchored in the bay right now, for an hour or so, and had phoned Jack to come over and visit the boat before he got out.

"I used to brag to him about you," Jack explained. "Showed him your pictures, and all that. I'd like him to meet you, and I don't want him to know you've let me down. So be a sport—go over to his boat with me, and pretend we're still engaged, will you?"

"Sure. I don't mind, Jack." While she wondered to herself why he sounded so everlastingly serious about it. "But I can't go now. I'm going riding with Guy."

"But Crane is putting out this morning, Janet. We've got to go now if we're going. Couldn't you postpone your riding, just this once? For old times' sake, Janet. There's a good girl—"

Janet wasn't enthusiastic. It wasn't what she wanted to do, at all. She wanted to go with Guy. But she supposed that was being selfish. Jack and Renée had been more than sporting these last few days. So she supposed it was up to her to favor Jack in this. She could leave a note pinned to the front door, where Guy would see it when he came over.

Afterward it was never easy for Janet to explain how what happened did happen.

She was down in the main cabin of the old freighter with Jack and Captain Crane. For Jack's sake she was being nice to Crane, but she didn't care for him. Something about his eyes. Then Crane excused himself, and a few minutes later Janet felt the boat moving.

"Why, Jack, isn't it moving?"

"Yeah." Jack was casual, and much preoccupied tinkering with a radio outfit. "Crane thought he would cruise around the bay a bit, to give you the thrill of a freighter in motion."

"Well, it isn't much of a thrill," laughed Janet. "But since it's going, we might as well go out and look around, and imagine," she grinned, "what it would be like to be headed for China."

"Yeah." Jack appeared much amused. "That would be a kick, wouldn't it?"

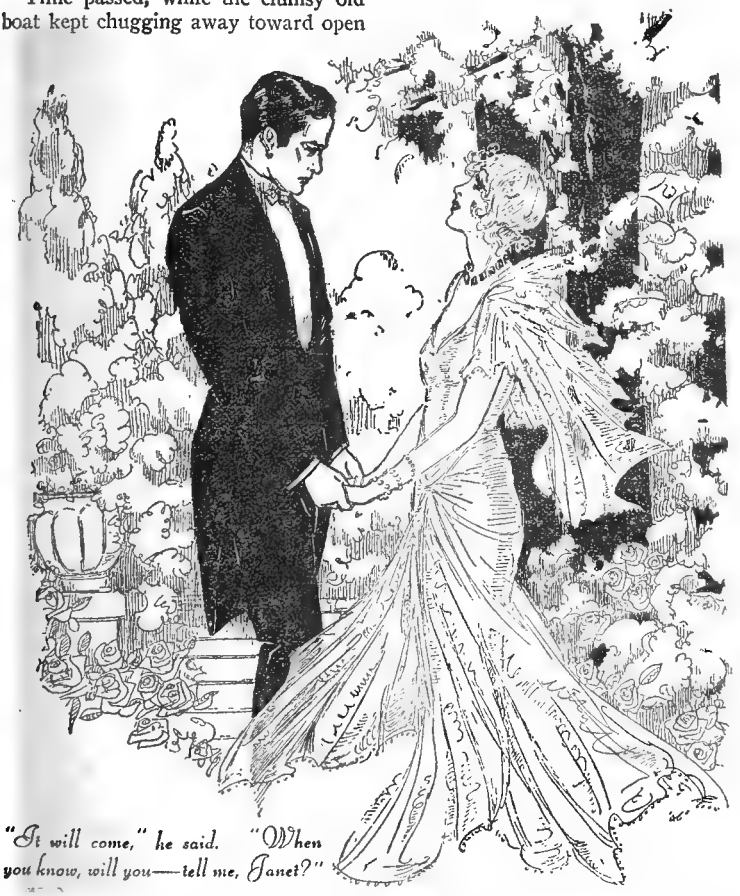
Out on deck a couple of leathery looking old sailors were busy with ropes and some iron rivets. Janet perched on a lifeboat and stared at the sea lapping up and down. What a funny old boat this was! She wondered what a long trip on it would be like. She knew a woman who had gone around the world on one of these

freighters, and had said it was fun. Not bad, Janet supposed, if you were a regular sea hawk, and not finicky about things.

Time passed, while the clumsy old boat kept chugging away toward open sea. Time to be turning back, Janet thought. She'd ask Jack how long before they'd turn.

She looked around but Jack had disappeared. Nobody in sight but one of those ageless sailors. "Won't you be turning back soon?" she called to him.

He spat some tobacco juice. "Not till we reach South America, lady."



"It will come," he said. "When you know, will you—tell me, Janet?"

He lumbered off down the deck while Janet stared after him, bewildered. Was the man crazy? Or had Jack misunderstood? Or—but no, that couldn't be. Quickly she closed

her mind to a dreadful suspicion. Jack wouldn't be guilty of such a thing.

She jammed on her tan linen riding hat, and went to look for him. Presently she discovered him down in the engine room with Captain Crane.

"Jack, a sailor up on deck said this boat was on its way to South America. There's some mistake."

Jack was busy lighting a cigarette. He said nothing, simply looked at her.

JANET stared at him, bewilderment growing in her eyes.

She turned to Crane. "Is that true? Is this boat on its way to South America?"

He nodded. Said nonchalantly: "That's where we're bound for, miss."

Janet's eyes went back to Jack. "Well, why don't we get off? For Heaven's sake, do something. We've got to get off. Why do you just stand there as if there was nothing to be done, and as if we weren't getting farther out to sea every minute?"

But Jack merely lounged up against a smokestack, regarding Janet with an arrogant, amused smile. "Aw, keep your shirt on, Janet. It's just a little surprise for you. Sure, we're heading for South America. What of it? You and I are going to have a nice little trip together. By and by, when you make up your mind, we'll get married. Crane here will marry us. He can, as captain, under maritime law."

Janet stared at him, sickening realization sweeping over her. She was being kidnaped. This was all a conspiracy.

She cried out, her eyes blazing, "You've tricked me, you—you devil! You think you're going to force me to marry you. Well, you won't. I warn you. And you'd better get me back to shore, or you'll be sorry."

Jack merely smiled.

Janet turned frantically to Captain Crane, who had moved a little away and had his back toward them. "Captain Crane, won't you get me back to shore somehow?" she appealed to him. "This is all a terrible mistake. I never intended to get on this boat to stay. I've got to get off! I've simply got to. Won't you please do something?" She was on the verge of hysterical tears.

Crane shook his head, turning partly toward her. "I'm sorry, Miss King. But I make it a point never to interfere in the love troubles of my friends. Jack here told me he wanted to take a little trip with me, and bring his *fiancée* along. He said it would be all right. That you might kick up a little at the start, like a woman will. But that's not my business—"

"But I'm not his *fiancée*," Janet broke out desperately. "I broke our engagement a week ago—"

"Why, lady, I congratulated both of you, and you admitted you were engaged to Jack when you first got on the boat."

Janet paled. It was true, of course; she had. Jack had asked her to pretend before Crane.

Captain Crane turned and walked away, making for another part of the boat. Clearly he didn't intend to interfere in the affair. Probably thought he was helping along a high romance, thought Janet, shivering.

"Be sensible, Janet," Jack was saying. "You're in love with me, you know that. So why let some pointless scruples stand in the way of our happiness? I'm really protecting you from yourself."

"I'm not in love with you," Janet blazed. "I wouldn't marry you if you were the last man on earth. I hate you."

"Oh, well, you'll get over that, too. You'll have time to get over lots of things by the time you reach South America," stated Jack coolly.

Janet rushed out of the little engine room. She was too furious to stand any longer talking to Jack, since apparently it was going to get her nowhere. She went looking for Crane. The absurdity of the situation occurred to her for the first time, as she looked down at her riding togs. Kidnaped—bound for South America on an old freighter, and not a thing to wear but linen riding togs. It would be ridiculous if it were not so exasperating and frightening.

She located Captain Crane.

"Am I to have a cabin to myself, or is it part of your plan for me to use the deck as a stateroom?" she inquired icily.

"Sure, I'll show you where you can bunk." He led the way down to a crude little room with two built-in bunks. "I'm sorry about all this, Miss King," he began. "But I'm in a bad position—"

"Oh, don't worry," retorted Janet pleasantly, preparing to shut the door in his face. "You'll probably be in a much worse position when my guardian begins to hunt for me!"

She slammed the door shut.

IT was past midnight of the third day when the real excitement began.

Janet had just drifted into a sound sleep when there came a crunching noise and then—*bang*—she found herself pitched headlong from the bunk. It felt as if the freighter had crashed into some obstruction.

Stopping only to wrap herself in an old coat she had borrowed from Crane, Janet hurried up to the deck to discover that the ship's hull had been ripped and her holds were rapidly filling with water. Sailors were moving around with set lips battling desperately to pull the freighter clear of the obstacle, whatever it was.

Janet stood watching them, terrified as she realized that this might mean the doom of the boat. And—incidentally—of her.

Jack appeared on deck, wrapped in a blanket, his face ashen. All this time Janet had been refusing to notice him, or have anything whatever to do with him. Now he stumbled over to her side.

"For God's sake, what is happening?" he panted.

Janet managed to reply as coolly as if she herself weren't almost frightened to death. "Only something verging on a shipwreck, old dear. Surely a big, strong man who kidnaps defenseless girls isn't going to get nervous over a mere trifle like this?"

Her tone was contemptuous.

"Aw, be decent, Janet," he implored her. "Why, we may be going to die!" Janet could see that his teeth were chattering, his lips white. Coward, she thought to herself, as she turned away, moving up toward the prow, where several of the crew were working under Crane's direction.

About even chances for getting through safe or going down, one sailor assured her. They were sending out radio calls for help. One good thing, they weren't so very far from shore. It wouldn't take long for a pilot boat to come out and steer them in.

A long time passed. Or what seemed a long time.

Then a tiny light was seen moving swiftly in the direction of the freighter. It came more and more rapidly, growing larger as it came. Soon it was

evident that it was some sort of sailing yacht. Not so large—but large enough to cut through this sea at a good pace.

Janet kept close to the boat's edge, watching the approaching vessel eagerly. Whatever it was, it meant not only safety but escape for her. What a break—

The strange boat was close now, almost touching. And then, miracle of miracles, Janet heard a voice—*Guy's voice*—calling, "Ahoy, there!" She could see him standing in the bow, eagerly scanning the deck of the freighter. Now he had seen her!

"Guy!" she cried, incredulous. "Here I am! Is it really you?"

"Janet!" It was a happy cry of relief.

The two boats were side by side now. Another minute and Janet had been hoisted over to the yacht's deck. "Thank God, you're safe!" breathed Guy when he had her beside him, his hands on her shoulders. Then a question creeping into his eyes, "You *are* safe, aren't you? You haven't been forced into anything?"

Janet shook her head. "I'm all okay," she grinned. "But I sure have been praying like sixty!"

Guy smiled, but in his fine eyes was unutterable relief mixed with tenderness. And Janet could feel his hands on her shoulders tremble.

Renée was hovering in the background, waiting to greet her. It was hard, however, for Janet to treat the other girl cordially, for the feeling persisted that Jack's sister had had more than a little to do with all that had happened.

There was Jack to be got aboard the yacht, too, although Janet couldn't help wishing she had seen the last of him forever. Almost unbelievable that such a short time ago she had thought she loved the fellow. Unprincipled bully that he had shown himself to be.

Guy offered to take the crew and the few passengers on the freighter as far as shore. But they had sighted a pilot boat, and the worst of their troubles seemed over.

"HOW on earth did you ever get here, and how—and why—everything?" demanded Janet of Guy when the four of them were safe in the cozy yacht cabin. She was half laughing, half crying. She had been through so much.

"Well, I'll tell you, kid," began Guy slowly, packing an old meerschaum pipe very deliberately as he spoke. "We're the bearers of some bad news, I'm afraid. And that is how we happened to get here."

"Bad news?" Janet looked puzzled.

"Um-hum." Guy lighted his pipe and began to puff. "After you disappeared a telegram arrived for you. Renée asked my advice, and I suggested that we open it. And—well, you can read it for yourself." Reaching in his coat pocket, Guy drew out a yellow envelope and handed it over. All the while it seemed to Janet that he was looking at her very queerly. Almost as if his eyes were trying to send her some message.

> Better return New York at once. Unfortunate investments. Your money practically lost. Sorry.
>
> NORTON KEYES.

Janet read it through three times. She looked back at Guy, scarcely able to realize the import of the message. It seemed impossible. Norton Keyes was such a shrewd business man; her money had always been so conservatively invested. Yet there it was, in black and white. "Your money practically lost!"

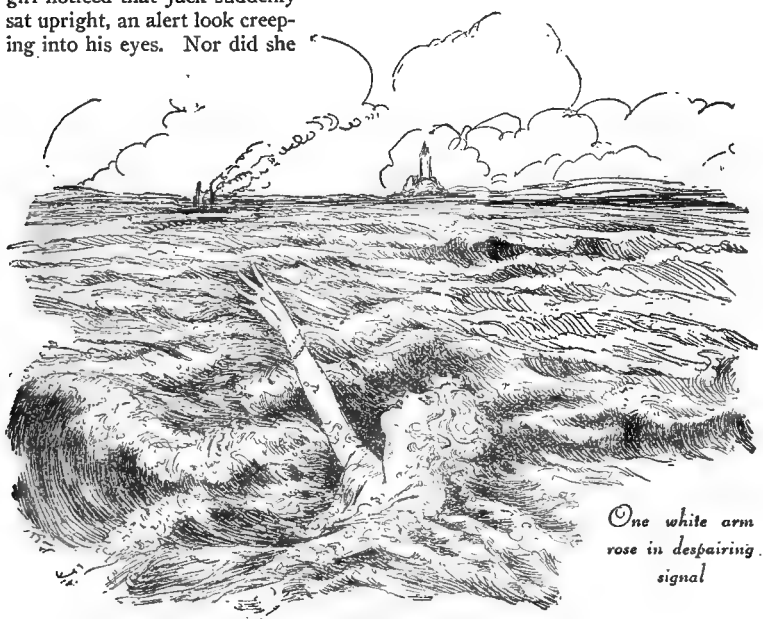
And then Janet laughed. She couldn't help it. There was real absurdity in the way calamity persisted in following her.

As she read the telegram aloud, the girl noticed that Jack suddenly sat upright, an alert look creeping into his eyes. Nor did she miss the quick glance he exchanged with Renée. It seemed very significant. Renée had said nothing.

"And so," Guy was saying, "we had no idea all this time where you were, of course. But after the arrival of the telegram, Renée seemed to have a hunch—psychic you might call it, eh, Renée?—that you and Jack might have eloped on his friend's boat. It seemed wise to get this message to you as quickly as possible. So I managed to rent this yacht and we started out to comb the sea for you. Those radio messages helped a lot."

He sat back, puffing serenely at his pipe. It occurred to Janet that he didn't look especially sympathetic over the loss of her money.

"It's perfectly awful, of course,"



One white arm rose in despairing signal

began Renée. The first words she had spoken since they sat down.

"What's perfectly awful?" asked Janet quickly.

"Why, about your money."

"Oh! My money. It didn't seem awful, then— Jack's deciding to kidnap me and carry me off on that boat—"

"You're crazy, Janet," retorted Renée. "I don't believe Jack kidnaped you at all. That's just the story you are telling now. I suppose you don't want Guy to know the truth about it—that you were eloping with

Jack. Anyway, if he kidnaped you, I'm sure I know nothing about it."

"I think you know *all* about it," declared Janet, suddenly and strangely confident that Renée did know. Had known all along. "If you told the truth, you'd admit that you helped plan it."

"Why, you little hussy," rasped Renée, her eyes darting fire, half rising from her chair. "How dare you say such a thing?"

Janet jumped up. "I'm going outside," she announced. "This cabin isn't big enough for the four of us—not after all that has happened."

GUY came, a few minutes later, to where she stood by the railing. There, in the silver pool of moonlight, they faced each other. With a slow, infinitely tender smile, Guy drew her slowly into his arms.

"To think," she began, "that you should do all this for me."

"All what, little sweetheart?"

"Why, get this boat. Start to South America after me—"

"That's nothing. I'd start to Mars after you if it were necessary."

"You haven't even asked me what happened. If I was to blame—"

"I don't need to ask you," he replied. "I have a pretty good notion of what happened. I'm neither deaf, dumb, nor blind."

She grinned. "I think I must have been," she mused, "all three."

Guy drew her closer to him, tilted her flower-like face up so that her eyes were looking directly into his.

"So much has happened," whispered Janet softly. "I wonder what will happen next."

Her lovely mouth lay like a scarlet, half opened bud, directly beneath his own. "How would this do?" he asked, his voice husky, as his lips claimed hers in a long, fierce kiss. "I love you," he muttered hoarsely. "Dear God, I love you so."

"And I—" Janet began. But before she could finish her sentence the captain of the vessel had called to Guy to come aft a minute.

But no sooner was he gone than another figure that had been standing unobserved in the shadows came swiftly toward Janet.

Renée was right upon her before Janet was aware of her coming. And then, without prelude, and to Janet's everlasting consternation, Renée reached out and smacked her as hard as ever she could, full in the face.

Janet stepped back, gasping. "Why Renée, have you gone crazy?"

"No, I haven't gone crazy," retorted the other, between teeth almost shut. "But I'll teach you to come stealing a man I want. You knew all along that I wanted Guy. You deliberately set out to get him for yourself. I suppose you think you're smart. Making up that story about not marrying Jack because of his gambling. Well, Jack wouldn't have you on a bet now, you little pauper. But you're not going to have Guy, not if I know it. And right now I'm going to teach you to keep your hands off of him."

Janet had kept edging away, feeling more and more that she was in the presence of a half crazy woman. But Renée was too quick for her. Without warning, her hand shot out a second time, sending Janet reeling to catch at the ship's railing.

At that moment Renée caught sight of the locket—Guy's locket—which still hung about Janet's throat.

She snatched for it crazily. Before Janet could realize what she was about

Renée had given it a jerk—the thin gold chain snapped—a second more, and with vicious aim the older woman had tossed the bauble into the sea.

Janet cried out as she saw the painted miniature tossing and bobbing, caught on a piece of seaweed, on the clear, moonlit surface of the water. A dozen unrelated thoughts jumped to her mind. Guy's most treasured possession, the miniature of his mother. The pledge they held between them! Bad luck to lose his first gift. She was a fairly good swimmer. The water was as calm as a lake.

Another second and, tossing her shoes to the deck, Janet had climbed to the yacht's railing. She poised the briefest minute, not letting herself think, then drew a deep breath and plunged toward the calm, icy depths.

It was madness, of course, a crazy impulse. No sooner had Janet come to the surface of the water, momentarily numbed by the bitter cold, than she began to realize this. For a minute she gasped for breath, thrashing the water in an effort to stay afloat, while the boat moved swiftly away from her. Dimly, by the pale moonlight, she could see the bobbing locket being carried briskly in an opposite direction.

Suddenly Janet was afraid. She had started courageously in the direction of the locket with an overhand stroke. But she was not a strong swimmer, and when it was almost within her grasp, a sharp breeze swept it several feet farther.

Creeping numbness from the cold, and the sight of the boat moving so rapidly away, began to set her in a panic. She got water in her nose and mouth and half strangled. That set her thrashing water again, while a terrible fear clutched her heart. Would Renée let her drown, and do nothing to save her? She saw Jack appear on deck and stand beside his sister. He shouted something, but she couldn't make out what it was.

By this time, the locket had been carried so far that recovering it was out of the question. It was now a matter of getting back to the boat alive. She flung the water from her eyes and mouth, and started toward it. But her progress was terribly slow. The harder she struggled, the less progress she made. She seemed to be getting nowhere at all, while one leg was becoming hopelessly cramped.

She raised her eyes imploringly to the two figures on the deck who were standing, simply watching her.

Then, a third figure appeared. It was Guy. Janet saw him strip off his coat. Heard his voice shouting an order, "Stop the boat."

Then he was in the water, coming rapidly toward her with a powerful crawl stroke.

All her strength was gone now. She could only try to keep afloat until Guy reached her.

She had been in the water little more than ten minutes. But it seemed as many hours, indeed, it seemed an eternity before Guy's one arm closed about her. "Let yourself go—don't clutch me, just hold on lightly—" she felt, rather than heard him saying.

How funny those stars looked bobbing in the sky—now they were gone —it was dark— She closed her eyes. How dark it was plunging down—down—down—

JANET was on a narrow white bed, in a white and brass stateroom, and Guy was leaning over her.

She smiled faintly, trying to move a hand.

"Take it easy, honey." He reached for a flask. "Drink this—don't care if it does strangle you—it will warm you. There—"

Life oozed back slowly. It seemed ages before she had recovered enough to talk about things. Then Guy half raised her, slipping his arm around her shoulders. She rested against him, blessedly content.

"Such a glutton for adventure I never did see," he grinned at her chidingly. "As if one near-drowning wasn't enough for one night. And now would you mind telling me what inspired this Hairbreadth-Harry adventure?"

Briefly Janet told him. Although it was hard to make Renée's actions clear. She didn't understand them herself. "But I wanted the locket—and it looked so easy to get—"

"You crazy kid," he smiled. But his arm around her tightened, and there was unutterable tenderness in the eyes that met hers. "I can scarcely believe it: that something I had given you could mean so much to you as all that."

She snuggled closer in his arms, feeling strangely happy and content.

"Why did you ever want it back enough to take that chance?" he demanded at last.

She was a long time answering. But when it came, her reply more than satisfied him. She whispered, "Because—I love you."

At that she found herself achingly crushed in his arms, his lips pressed to hers in such a kiss as she had only dreamed about.

It was a long time before she had the chance to say: "But what a pauper you will have for a wife!"

At that he grinned, as if over a very funny joke. At last he explained. "Even if it were true, honey, it wouldn't make any difference to me. But it just happens you are no more a pauper than you ever were."

Janet sat up, bewildered. "What do you mean?"

"I had that telegram sent," he grinned at her.

As soon as he learned that Janet had unaccountably disappeared, he explained, his suspicions had been aroused. Renée pretended that it was all a mystery to her, but Guy didn't believe her. He happened to know that both Renée and Jack had some very heavy debts, and had his own reasons for believing that it was imperative—as they saw it—for Jack to marry Janet in order to get hold of some money.

Piecing all this together, Guy figured that if Renée did know anything about Janet's whereabouts and if she were led to believe that Janet's money was gone, she would quickly tell what she knew. So it had proved. Renée, of course, had pretended that she only "had a hunch" the two of them might have eloped on the freighter.

"What a fool I was ever to put the faith in them that I did. Or to imagine that I loved him—"

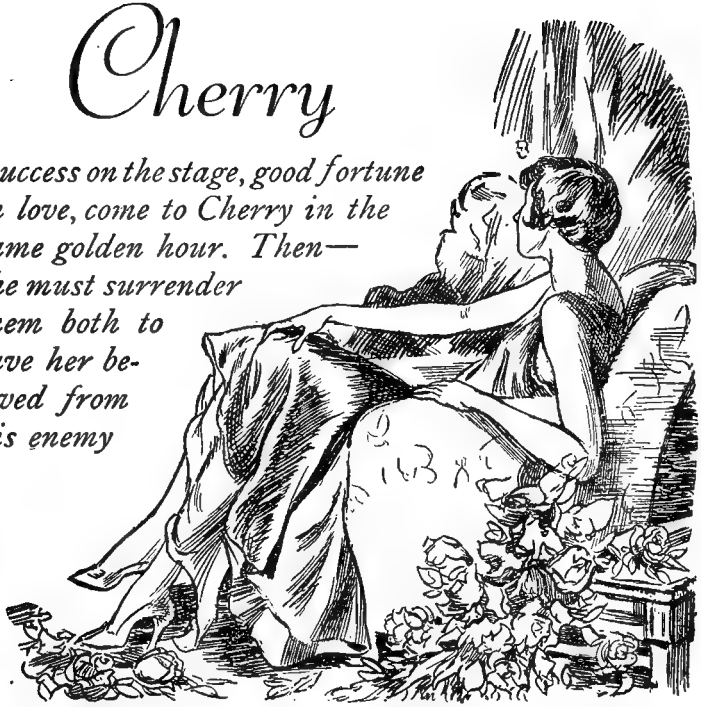
"But why bother regretting all that," Guy reminded her, "since that was the by-road you had to travel to come to the big road of—you and me! Perhaps that was the reason for it all."

She was gathered very close in his arms, her head nestled against his shoulder. "All of which goes to prove that when you start out on one road, you never can tell where on earth you're going to end up," she mused with a slow smile.

"Which after all," finished Guy, drawing her lips up to his, "is the great big kick of life."

Cherry

Success on the stage, good fortune in love, come to Cherry in the same golden hour. Then—she must surrender them both to save her beloved from his enemy



"When you were born, Love set his seal on your brow, and said: 'Wait for me!'"

By Marguerite Lovell

CHERRY is a French orphan, the slavey of Ted Burney and his unhappy wife, Rosa. Rosa finally runs away after advising Cherry to do the same.

At the hospital, where she was taken after an accident, Cherry has met Dr. Hugh Marlton, the great young surgeon, who interests himself in her, and asks her to come to see him on a certain afternoon. She is prevented from keeping the appointment by Burney, who is acquainted at the motion picture studios, and has determined to get Cherry into the screen world. He takes her to a studio, and after a test of her voice and ability, gets a contract for her.

On the way home he gives her a half dollar to buy their dinner, and leaves her. Inspiration comes to Cherry. Here is her chance to escape her hated guardian! She gives the fifty cents to a taxi driver to take her to Dr. Marl-

ton—but on the steps she is informed that he is out of town.

XI

THE disappointment in Cherry's face was so acute that the man felt sorry for her.

"Will you leave a message, miss?" he asked.

"Tell him—tell him that Cherry called," she said dully. "I came as soon as I could." She hesitated, then unfastened from her blouse a small bunch of Parma violets that one of the actresses had given her. "Please take these," she said, "and put them on his desk for me. Put them in water, won't you?"

"Yes, miss. Certainly, miss." The expression on the well-trained face was stolid. "Is there anything else?"

"No," wearily, "but can you tell me the best way to get home? West Tenth Street."

"There's the subway over on Lexington, or the bus—"

"The shortest way to walk," she interrupted.

"Oh, you can't walk it, Miss—Miss Sherry. It's too far."

She held out her empty hands with an expressive little French gesture. He inserted two fingers in his vest pocket and drew out a coin.

"No—no," she protested, and lifted her head proudly. "I do not beg."

He pressed the coin upon her. "You must take it. Dr. Marlton would be angry with me if I let a—a little friend go away without car fare. It is nothing." He silenced her thanks with a wave of his hand. "You will come again?" he asked.

"Yes. When I am twenty-one," she answered, and went down the steps, leaving him staring after her.

She could not see very well; her eyes were full of tears—tears of disappointment and sorrow. Now she would never see Hugh Marlton again, or if she did, it would be at a date so far distant that he would have forgotten her. And she would have to go back to Burney—there was nowhere else to go. Already he would be raging for his supper, too, and she had nothing to give him. How explain what had become of his money?

She turned half blindly toward the subway, and followed the manservant's directions as to how to get home.

On the corner of her own street there was a fish market, and the owner was standing in the doorway. A bright idea came to Cherry. Why shouldn't she offer him five minutes' entertainment in exchange for a piece of fish?

Certainly the man possessed a sense of humor, for he grinned broadly as he accepted her suggestion, and West Tenth Street was presently edified by the sight of a small girl in a red béret and tattered costume pirouetting before a fish dealer's shop. Her dance over, the man cut down a good-sized salmon and handed it to her. "French, ain't you?" he asked. "I had a little mademoiselle when the war was on—you put me in mind of her, with your big eyes and little face. Don't start remembering me, there's a good girl, or the missus may hear and say I didn't ought. Run home, now, and enjoy your supper."

And Cherry, followed by the cheers of the crowd that had sprung up to watch her performance, seized the package of fish and darted up the steps of the dingy house in which she lived.

"You've sure taken your time," Burney greeted her. "I was just going to the police, in case you'd tried to give me the slip again."

He undid the package as she hung up her coat and took a frying pan from the shelf.

"What's this?" he exclaimed. "Salmon!"

Cherry calmly put fat in the pan and lit the gas burner.

"The fishman he make me a gift," she replied.

Burney roared. "So you've clicked with a fishman, now? Well, I've no objection, so long as he keeps on saying it with salmon. You'd better try it on the butcher and the baker, while you're about it."

The next morning Burney cleared the breakfast table, with his eye on the clock. He tripped over a cardboard hatbox pierced with holes, and kicked it out of the way beneath the table. Tired as she was, Cherry had sat up the night before to prepare that box for Mee-wee to travel in.

"Hurry up, Cherry, or we'll miss the train," he called impatiently.

She came running down the stairs. She had changed her old ragged dress and was arrayed in garments Burney had collected for her in a bargain basement. Her face was like a thundercloud.

The man veered round, surveying her. The dress he had chosen was a tunic, suitable for a child of eleven, with a shapeless felt hat to match. He had also included a coat several sizes too small.

"These garments," she announced contemptuously, "they do not give me fits. In the sleeves I am uncomfortable. Across the chest I strangle. As for the hat"—she flung the despised headgear dramatically at his feet—"nevaire have I possessed a shape so hideous!"

Burney picked it up.

"The shape doesn't matter if the face underneath it is all right," he rejoined. "You'll have to wear it whether you want to or not. Where's your thanks for all my generosity? Nothing pleases your ladyship. What's your objection, I'd like to know?"

"This costume"—she indicated her tunic—"is for a schoolgirl with not more than thirteen years."

"I chose it on purpose," he told her. "On the screen, as soon as a woman is thirty she's finished. If you can pass yourself off younger than you are when you begin, you're lengthening your life as an actress. Come along or we'll miss our train!"

"In one moment." Cherry hung back. "Mee-wee accompanies us, but first he must drink."

"Mee-wee won't need milk on the journey he's gone. He's started on a longer one than us," Burney said.

But Cherry did not hear him. She had run off to get the little cat.

Then he heard an exclamation of dismay, and she flew back into the room.

"We cannot go!" she cried. "The little cat has disappeared!"

"For good." Burney broke the cruel news at last. "I wrung his neck this morning, before you were up."

The color drained from Cherry's cheeks, leaving them ashen. Her expression was piteous.

He picked up his suitcase. "Don't stand pulling that face, or your eyes 'll drop out of your head. Did you expect I'd let you cart a cat on location?"

Cherry moistened her dry lips. She could not believe she would never see her little pet again.

"Are you telling me that Mee-wee—is—dead?" she stammered out.

He nodded callously.

"You bet! Dead as a doornail, and buried in the ashcan. Here y' are.

Take it." He forced her suitcase into her hand.

A red mist swam before Cherry's eyes. She swayed and nearly fell.

With a mighty effort she calmed herself, surprising Burney, who had expected rage and tears. Only her dark eyes, glowing like hot coals, were fixed upon his face with such abhorrence that he flinched, hard crusted though he was.

"Now I shall hate you all my life!" she cried.

XII

A SLENDER woman, marvelously dressed, stood in Marlton's hall, surrounded by trunks and hatboxes. She wore a black frock devised by Poiret, beneath a cloak lined with emerald green. A single parrot's feather streamed from her pert little hat, the whole ensemble enhancing the red of her hair, the whiteness of her skin, and the unnatural crimson of her lips—rather full lips over tiny, even teeth, so small that they caused her to speak with a faint and most captivating lisp.

Wanda Marlton had returned to town. Leach, the doctor's valet, had opened the door to her and helped the perspiring taxi driver up the steps with her luggage.

"Dr. Marlton not in?" she inquired.

"The doctor is dining at his sister's, madam. Shall I ring him up and tell him you've returned?"

"No; there's no need." Wanda turned to go upstairs. "Have my trunks taken up and send the cook to me, will you?"

Whenever Wanda returned home she invariably upset the domestic female staff and sent it flying. Since the last upheaval, Leach had carried on all duties single-handed.

"There is no cook in the house, madam," he informed her. "I have been managing for the doctor lately. Would you care for a cutlet, and a sweet omelet to follow?" he suggested.

Wanda wrinkled her pretty nose.

"For heaven's sake think of something more original!" she complained. "Haven't I just come back from France, where it's omelets all the time? Make it something hot and spicy."

She glanced at the good-looking young manservant through her heavily made-up lashes. Wanda did not confine her wiles by any means to the men of her own world. She practiced them upon any sort of man. Leach never came alive at all, though. He intensely disliked this green-eyed woman for her treatment of his beloved employer, but no flicker of feeling showed in his face.

"Carry on with the trunks first," she said.

Leach carried a trunk up to her room, set it down and turned on the electric fire. He drew the curtains and paused.

"Is there anything else I can do for your ladyship?"

"Yes." Wanda flung her keys across the bed. "Unlock this, and unpack. That's my kimono on top. I'll have it. When you've finished, I'll have a cocktail." She trailed off humming a tune.

SHE floated down to dinner later in a gold tea gown embroidered with sprawling Chinese dragons, with a necklace of jade Buddhas around her throat. A faint perfume, subtly Eastern, hung about her.

Leach brought in dinner, admirably cooked and served. Afterward, she ensconced herself in the library, where it was warm and cozy.

Like a cat, she sat doing nothing for the best part of an hour, her eyes narrowed to sleepy slits; and then Marlton came in. She waved her cigarette in its long holder at him by way of greeting.

"Here I am. Surprised to see me?"

"Just a little." He stooped and kissed her dutifully. "Why didn't you wire? I'd have had things ready for you."

"Oh, Leach managed very well," she informed him. "I'll be home only a few days. Will you mind if I'm away three months or so next time? The Torrances want me to go into camp with them in the desert. I wish we could pick up some sheiks." She shifted her position, half closing her eyes as she looked at him. "It's a funny thing, Hugh. You know I wanted money, security and a husband behind me; but I also wanted you—a strong, silent man. I half thought you'd behave like a sheik. I suppose you're disappointed in me as a woman? Well, I can't understand you as a man."

Marlton had crossed to his desk and commenced to tidy the papers there.

"I'm not very baffling," he said. "My ideas of life are more or less to scale."

"Work," she pouted. "Work, first and last, when you've no need to do anything at all, because you've a large private income already. Work—when you could spend your whole time making a fuss over me and buying me clothes. I can make a man forget the whole world. You don't believe in my Yogi tricks, do you, Hugh? Getting what I want through jiggery-pokery? Well, I can. I learned a lot in India."

"I suppose there is such a thing as black magic," Marlton said, "but I shouldn't like to think of your practicing it."

"Well, I do. I like seeing what I can do—sending out waves and drawing people into my net— Hello! What are these words in a frame?"

She had strolled over to his desk and picked up a small frame on it, with Cherry's creed of life copied out in his own hand.

"'*Courage,*'" she read. "'*The gray clouds chase themselves across the blue sky for an inscrutable purpose. Then the sun shines, God smiles, and all is well.*' What piffle!" she observed. "Who wrote it?"

"A little girl I met at the hospital repeated it to me. I wrote it down."

"Did she give you these flowers?"

She pointed to the violets, still fresh and blooming, on the desk.

"Yes; she left them for me yesterday."

"Oh!" Her green eyes glinted. "So you're actually coming on! Do you see her—often?"

"I've seen her once only. She's a mere child," he informed her shortly.

"How old?"

"Fifteen or so; but she seems younger."

Wanda was getting bored now. She was not interested in children. "Why not adopt her?" she asked with a little yawn. "A ready-made kid might fill your bill, Hugh—give you an interest in life besides work. Are you going to sit up late to-night?"

"Yes."

"I'll go, then." She stood facing him, deliberately provocative.

Marlton looked at her, and was stirred by an impulse to save her, if he could, from herself.

She was his wife, yet a stranger to him, becoming more so every day. Surely it was possible that she possessed a heart, a soul, even if he had not touched them yet.

He held out his hands and took hers.

"Is this empty life satisfying you, my dear?" he said. "Can't we make a better job of it together?"

WANDA perched on the edge of her husband's chair.

"Of course I'm contented with my life," she answered lightly. "Why call it empty? I enjoy myself tremendously from morning till night. Don't look at me so seriously, Hugh, as if I have a mortal illness and am going to pass out. Do you see any alarming symptoms in my face?"

She tilted it up under the electric chandelier as she spoke. She looked very alluring, and she knew it.

Marlton shook his head.

"Not a mortal illness," he answered gravely, "but a sick soul, perhaps."

She stared back at him, her eyes hard now.

"You ought to set up as a preacher, not a surgeon," she snapped. "So you think I'm in a bad way? Do you see me coming to an untimely end?"

Marlton did not seem to be looking at her, but beyond her. "I see you heading straight toward an abyss," he answered, "deaf to any warning, and falling over—beyond help."

She laughed.

"Why worry? I was born without a soul. You can't save me. I don't want to be saved."

Her husband turned away disappointedly. His face looked sad.

After she had trailed out of the room, he sat down at his desk, and the perfume of Cherry's violets floated up to him soothingly. There was as much difference between their natural fragrance and the heady scent Wanda used as there was between the two women.

And Cherry had gone out of his life leaving that message that she would come back when she was twenty-one—five whole years, at least, from now. The funny child! The funny child!

When he had finished the reading and writing he had to do, it was past midnight. The house was very quiet.

A faint blue haze hung about the hall, diffusing a heavy aroma suggestive of temples in the East. He opened his wife's door very quietly and looked in. A Chinese saucer full of cigarette butts stood on her bed-table, also a dish of fruit.

She was lying on her back, with her eyes wide open. For the moment, he thought she was awake; but she did not move; coming closer, he observed that she was in a trance.

The odor of incense was very strong in the room. It came from a burner on her dressing table, set before a small carved image with six arms, and the head of a snake above its forehead.

Marlton felt curiously ill at ease. There was something in the room, an uncanny influence that oppressed him.

He extinguished the scented pastille burning before the god and quietly withdrew. The figure on the bed did not stir.

XIII

DURING the two weeks on location, Alfred Fitch observed Cherry closely, recognizing her gifts. She had a marvelous voice, and a capacity for emotion that surprised him. Directing her was a joy, for she never had to be shown anything twice. Her part in the film was not a leading one, but it stood out. Burney played her father, the drunken captain of a tramp steamer, and his rôle fitted him like a glove. He had nothing to do but be himself.

Cherry's eyes haunted the director. Despair looked out of them at times, and yet they were eyes which should have danced with happiness and the joy of living. What was the matter with the child?

the most trivial offenses. Frequently he would sit down to a meal with her, only to snatch away her plate before she commenced to eat, and fling its contents on the floor. He would send her supperless to bed night after night,

"You do not like me grown-up?" she asked. "I am not so nice?"

He did not know that Burney, being in funds, had taken to drinking heavily, and all his spleen was vented upon Cherry now, since there was no Rosa to browbeat any more.

To torment the girl, he resorted to barbarous methods of punishment for

to pay her back for what he called her impudence.

Another of his villainous reprisals took the form of physical endearments. He would kiss her brutally, tugging without mercy meanwhile at a strand of curly hair each side of her

head. She dreaded that far more than being deprived of a meal, or even several meals.

To-day, as they sat down to their midday meal, she saw he had been drinking even more freely than usual. He began by taking away her dinner and giving her a glass of water instead.

Her lips quivered. A course of starvation is likely to undermine the most dauntless spirit.

"Please to give me a little meat," she requested; "otherwise I may become ill and unable to work."

"I'll teach you not to be ill with me," Burney grumbled. "You've got to be more of an artist, my kid, and live your part. Watch *me!* I'm supposed to be a drunken skipper. Well, I *am* a drunken skipper. You're a half-starved kid. You can't play a rôle like that on a full stomach, you little pig! Fitch is shooting our big flogging act to-day. He'll have to let me have a real whip, for a change, instead of a stick with a ribbon on it."

He glowered at her.

"After our scene to-day, you've got to double for Miss Marvel," he went on. "She's supposed to stand on the edge of the cliff, looking down at the sea and rocks; and Miss Marvel said she can't stand the wind and the spray—they'd spoil her permanent. That's your chance. I told Fitch you'd do it."

Cherry blanched. She had a physical terror, common to many people, of looking down from any height.

"Burney, I cannot do it," she said tremulously. "Up on high, I am afflicted; I become so dizzy in the head that I must fall."

"You won't fall," Burney replied. "You needn't look. Shut your eyes and say your prayers. Mind, you're not to let Fitch see you're funking it! If you do, I'll beat you so to-night that you'll never be afraid of any height again."

Cherry shrank away, terror and loathing in her eyes.

Burney lurched to his feet.

"Time we started," he said.

CHERRY put on her hat and coat and followed his unsteady footsteps to the pier and thence by rowboat to the old ship where the sea scenes were being staged.

It was rough and windy, but the sun was brilliant, and Fitch was anxious not to miss a moment of it. He was in great hopes of finishing the picture to-day.

He handed Burney a heavy whip.

"Use it carefully, Ted," he cautioned. "Keep your back to the camera and you needn't touch the girl. You can lash wide."

Burney took the whip. He handled it lovingly.

The director stood back. The expression upon Burney's lowering features was excellent. So, too, was the fear and misery in Cherry's face.

Fitch mounted the companionway and proceeded to direct from there. He was an enthusiast at all times, but this particular picture absorbed him. All of his men and women were right in their parts except Miss Marvel, the star. She was walking through her part, not troubling to put herself out in the least. Apart from her mediocre performance, this was going to be a very wonderful picture.

Fitch, of course, couldn't use a megaphone. The scene had been rehearsed and he directed by gestures.

Burney grasped the girl by the shoulders; she cowered from him.

"No, no!" she cried. "I'm through!"

Then he took the whip and lifted it high. With a gusto that was not assumed he brought it down, whistling and cracking round Cherry's shoulders. She swayed, fell to her knees, and lay still, a pathetic little huddle. Burney threw away the whip. All the while, the camera man was turning, and Fitch was so carried away that he did not grasp that his caution to aim wide had been disobeyed.

"Great!" he shouted, clapping his hands together. "We shan't need to do that again!"

Cherry did not move, and Burney stood still, staring down at her stupidly.

Seeing that something was wrong now, Fitch ran quickly down on deck. The lash had torn the girl's dress. He saw the livid mark on the tender flesh, and turned upon the villain of his picture.

"Didn't you hear me tell you to aim wide?" he rapped out.

"Never heard of an actor getting carried away by his part, I suppose?" Burney replied sulkily. "The kid's not hurt. Think I'd hit her on purpose? We're all in all to each other, us two. I'll take her below and look after her myself."

He lifted the inert little body and staggered down the wooden companionway into one of the cabins, where he threw her on a bunk.

She opened her eyes and looked around her.

Burney bent over her, his lips drawn back savagely over his large teeth.

"So you thought you'd try to get me into trouble with Fitch by throwing a faint, did you?" he snarled. "You can't show me any tricks. You can lie still and calm yourself until you're called to double for Miss Marvel on shore."

Cherry was trembling as though with ague. The pain of the blows he had rained on her was swallowed up in this greater fear before her, of having to stand upon a height.

She clasped her hands.

"Burney," she besought him, "I assure you I cannot keep my feet up high. If I fall and smash up, where will you be then?"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"On velvet, I should say," he rejoined callously. "Why, I'd get such heavy compensation out of the company that I'd be able to set up producing on my own!"

XIV

TWENTY minutes later, when Burney reëntered the shack, he found Cherry upon her knees. He gave her a flick on the shoulder.

"Holding a church meeting for one?" he sneered. "Pity you didn't have it on deck for us all!"

Cherry rose to her feet, outwardly calm.

"I am ready," she told him.

"That's right. There's a hell of a wind come up; you'll have to stand firm."

He led her on deck again, where the players were getting into boats, to be rowed out to the rocky cove.

Fitch came to her side.

"Feeling better, kid?" he asked. "Sure you're feeling fit enough to carry on?"

She could not look him in the face, or he might have seen the fear in her eyes.

"I am ready," she repeated in a low tone; and Fitch, who was busy and preoccupied, turned away, reassured.

Miss Marvel's scenes were shot first, in the shelter of the cove, and then it was Cherry's turn. The ledge of rock

on which she had to stand was eighty feet from the sea below. The descent was not quite sheer; a smaller ledge dotted with wild shrubs and bushes jutted out like a platform below it. But even that was far enough down to make Cherry's head swim as she looked over. She had not meant to glance down at all, but her eyes were drawn to see what lay beneath by the sheer fascination of fear, and she could not help herself.

Fitch and the camera man were some distance off. Burney had come up to watch, and the rest of the company remained in the cove below.

Cherry was not holding her pose right now. It was the first time she had ever failed to grasp and carry out the director's instructions.

Patiently Fitch went back to her. He took her arm persuasively. He was always extremely gentle in his methods.

"Cherry dear, you've got it wrong," he said. "Do your best, kid, because I want to finish to-day, and this is a key scene. You're expressing defiance. You throw out your arms—so, as if you were going to dive off. It's got to be a thrill. Try again."

He returned to the camera. The microphone was not working, for only music was to accompany this scene.

"I think she'll get it this time," he said hopefully. "She's so quick in the uptake as a rule. Now, then, Cherry, we're going to shoot," he shouted. "Ready! Run to the edge; stop suddenly—that's right. Hold it! Now fling your arms out. That's a grand gesture! This is going to be wonderf— My God! She's over!"

IT had all happened so quickly—one moment the little figure was there; the next it had disappeared over the ledge.

Fitch and the camera man raced toward the cliff, Burney running heavily after them.

The director peered over, dreading what he would see. The camera man spied Cherry first. He pointed.

"Look! Down there—on that ledge! She's not fallen sheer. She's caught on that scrub oak, thank the Lord!"

Fitch, who was lithe and agile, started to climb down, while the camera man ran back for a rope. Burney stood where he was, almost sobered by the occurrence. It might all come out that Cherry had been afraid. Well, if it did, he wasn't answerable to Fitch or anybody else. If a nervous dog funked the water, you chucked him in to make him swim, whether he wanted to or not. It was the same with Cherry. Most likely she'd done the whole thing to draw attention upon herself.

She wasn't dead, evidently not even hurt. She was hanging in the tree, caught by her clothing. Fitch was liberating her. Now she was playing up for all she was worth, the clever little cat — clinging on to Fitch like grim death — and he patting and soothing her—making more fuss over her than if she had been Miss Marvel herself.

The camera man returned with the rope, and the rest of the company, who had seen the mishap from below, came racing up to watch the rescue.

When Cherry was hauled over the cliff edge, Burney was the first to reach her side, folding her in his arms and murmuring over her as though he had been her own father. Miss Marvel, who had a weakness for big, strong men, was quite moved by the fond exhibition.

Except that she was scratched and shaken, Cherry was none the worse for the accident.

Burney took her back to their lodgings in a cab, and did not drop the mask of solicitude until they were within their own four walls, with the door safely shut.

But as soon as they were alone, his expression changed. He took the girl by the shoulders and forced her down into a chair.

"You've made a fine exhibition of yourself to-day, throwing faints and hurling yourself off rocks!" he opened fire. "I'll teach you to commit suicide to spite me!"

"It was not to spite you, Burney," she replied faintly. "I have no wish to give myself death, although my life with you is insupportable. I told you my head revolves upon a height, so that I become giddy and go over the top. It is a malady I cannot come over."

"I'll show you how to overcome it, next time you're asked! In the meantime, you'll say you're sorry for all the silly bother you've caused to-day. You'll say it my way, too. Stand up!"

He jerked her to her feet, twisting her wrists so that she flinched with pain.

"Now, down on your knees! You won't? Oh, I see! You'd rather I took you and kissed you, maybe—"

The threat was enough for Cherry. She knelt on the floor.

"That's better!" He stretched out his large, coarse hand with an imitation diamond flashing upon his little finger. "Now kiss my ring."

She drew back, rebellion surging within her.

"Have you not broken my spirit enough?"

Burney snorted.

"I'd like to know where the broken spirit comes in. You don't get up until you've kissed my hand. So here I'll stand, and there you'll kneel. We'll see which gets tired first."

Cherry's overwrought nerves were beyond control now. For days she had been starved and bullied in turn. She gave way suddenly, and could not check her sobs. Even a knock at the door made no difference; she could not pull herself together.

"Go and shove your head in a basin of cold water. There's some one at the door!" Burney dragged her to her feet and carried her bodily up the stairs.

"You can come down when you can behave yourself!"

He tossed her on the bed, lumbered downstairs again, and opened the door. He looked a trifle disconcerted to see his director standing there. The sound of Cherry's sobbing could be distinctly heard.

"Hello, Fitch!" He smiled suavely. "Want to see me?"

"Yes. May I come in? Thanks." Fitch stepped over the threshold.

Burney jerked his head toward the stairway. He had to account for that distressing noise; he couldn't pretend not to hear it.

"Cherry's got hysterics," he volunteered. "Hear her? She's a trial sometimes."

"Yes? I'd prefer to consider her a trust." Fitch held the fellow's eyes with a straight look. "The artistic temperament needs very special care—and understanding. It's about Cherry's future I've come to talk to you."

BURNEY waved the young director into a chair and produced a bottle of whisky.

"You want to talk about Cherry?" he repeated. "So do I. I've got her best interests at heart."

"I'm glad to hear it." Fitch de-

clined the proffered drink. "Her future is a matter of interest to us all. I'm able to offer her a long-term contract which I'd like you to consider. We want her services for the next three years, at a salary to be increased upon each picture she makes. We don't propose to star her to begin with. I'd like to see her develop gradually. I think she's going to be a very wonderful little girl."

Burney leaned back importantly in his chair. "You're not the only one who thinks so. What are your terms?"

Fitch placed a letter in front of him; Burney glanced at the contents and flicked the paper back. He lit a rank cigar.

"Sorry. Nothing doing," he replied curtly. He tapped his breast pocket. "I've got a contract here, ready to be signed, for four pictures, starring Cherry, under the directorship of Fritz von Stamp. I thought that would make you sit up!"

Fitch was silent for a moment, biting his lips. Then he cleared his throat. "There's too much at stake for little Cherry," he began. "Hollywood's no place at any time for a child like that; but with Von Stamp to direct her, she's doomed. You can't do it, man! If you're ambitious for her, if you don't think our contract's good enough, take her over to France—her own country. I'll give you an introduction to Nalpas, one of the best directors there; but keep her away from Von Stamp, whatever you do."

Burney extinguished the stump of his cigar, entirely unmoved. "I don't see that it's anything to worry over—quite the reverse. Cherry's going to be a star in double-quick time, and Von Stamp will be the man to help carve her name in letters of gold."

"In letters of infamy!" Fitch was very red in the face now. "It's an infernal shame, that's all I can say! You're consigning the girl to perdition, unless she takes it into her own hands and refuses to fall in with your plans."

Burney's jaws snapped together. "She can't refuse. She hasn't got any say."

Fitch got up.

"Well, there's no use in my staying," he said. "If you reconsider our offer, let me know. I don't think my people can better it, but I'll see what I can do."

Burney opened the door, and put on his hat at a rakish angle.

"I'll come with you," he volunteered. "Miss Marvel asked me to look in and see her at her hotel. That woman's fallen for me."

"You're honored." Fitch's tone was faintly satirical. "She's minus a husband at present. Her fifth divorce is just through. Perhaps she's feeling lonely."

"Perhaps she is. I'd have to think twice about it before I took her on." In his conceit, Burney swallowed the suggestion in all seriousness. He saw Fitch smiling. "You're laughing at me," he bridled. "You don't catch on to me as a serious proposition, Fitch. Why, where women are concerned, I can walk into any garden I choose and pick flowers. I'm chock full of S. A. I've never had a failure yet."

He swaggered along, bragging about his conquests until, to Fitch's relief, they reached the one hotel the little Southern town offered. The director cut him short:

"Well, here we are. I'll leave you."

Burney gave his cap another doggish tilt. He held out his hand, its false diamond flashing in the lamplight.

"Good night, old man. Thanks for the great interest you've shown in my

little girl. I'm sorry we can't do business."

His tone was grandiloquent, condescending. Already he saw himself on a high pinnacle of success as Miss Marvel's husband and Cherry's manager.

Fitch did not choose to see his outstretched hand.

"Good night, Burney," he answered. "I'm sorry, too—for that kid."

XV

WHEN her storm of sobbing had subsided, Cherry sat up and listened to the sound of voices in the room below. Now and again she caught her own name.

She got off the bed, tiptoed downstairs in her stockinged feet, and listened outside the door.

She heard Fitch's offer, Burney's refusal, and his triumphant announcement of the contract with Von Stamp. Her heart swelled with fury, indignation and rebellion. To act under the German was unthinkable. Inexperienced though she was, her every instinct warned her against Von Stamp.

Her mind worked desperately. To remain with Burney any longer was impossible. She must run away and hide, hide where he could never find her or bring her back. She thought of Marlton first, but to seek his protection might be to bring trouble upon him.

Rosa might assist her somehow, only she did not know where to find her. And how run away without any money to take her anywhere or to buy food?

She was turning matters over, seeking first one way of escape and then another, when there was a knock at the door, and much to her surprise Fitch walked in again, alone.

"I'm an absent-minded person, Cherry," he said. "I had a pay envelope for Burney in my pocket, and forgot to give it to him. Will you take care of it until he comes in? There's three hundred dollars inside, so don't mislay it."

Cherry held the envelope out again.

"I cannot take it, Monsieur Fitch," she declined. "I am afraid temptation would overcome me and I might become a robber; for I am in such need that it is more than possible I could not stop myself."

"But why shouldn't you?" he answered. "Most of it's yours, isn't it? It's the money you've earned."

She shook her head.

"Burney has not told me my acting was recompensed. I have received one quarter in two weeks."

"Good Lord!" Fitch ejaculated. He stroked his chin thoughtfully. "Are you in trouble, Cherry?" he asked.

"Monsieur Fitch, at the moment I am in desperation," she replied.

"I thought so. That's why I came back. Tell me all about it." He spoke very kindly. "That scoundrel leads you a life, doesn't he? What relation is he to you?"

"No relation, Monsieur Fitch," she enlightened him. "My mother died owing him rent, and ever since he has tightened the button—what you call?—put the screws upon me; and in the law I am in his possession until I become of age."

"He's told you that? Do you know if your mother left you in his care?"

"I know nothing," she replied. "She died without a long illness, Monsieur Fitch, and had no time to make the testament."

"You can't go on like this." Fitch spoke decidedly.

She nodded vehemently. "I will not work for Von Stamp. There is

only one escape. I must go to prison. If I am locked up, he cannot reach me. To-night I shall go out and climb in at a window of some house, and make so much noise that I am discovered, and the policemen will take me away."

Fitch's lips twitched.

"That wouldn't be good enough, Cherry. You'd get let off for certain as a first offender; you couldn't hoodwink a learned judge into believing you're a girl bandit. The law isn't such a blind idiot as all that. You must think of a better way. You'll need some money behind you, though. The whole of that pay in the envelope is yours by right, and more besides. You're entitled to it. Take it. I'd find my way to France. Go and see Nalpas there, and I feel sure he'll fix you up. I'll write him myself, and I'll fix up your passport for you. Besides, I'll keep the crowd down here another week, so that Burney won't be able to get back until you're well away. How's that?"

The look of grief in Cherry's face faded out. It was lit up with sunshine in a minute.

"Oh, Monsieur Fitch, you are an angel!" she cried. "If you say the money is mine, I will make my escape to-night. When Burney returns I shall be gone!"

Fitch held out his hand. "Good-by and good luck, Cherry," he said; "the very best!"

XVI

IT seemed curious to Marlton that, in spite of his business and unrest, Cherry was constantly upon his mind. Many times a day he found himself thinking about her and he would have given much to know how matters stood with her.

He had been strangely drawn to the child; there had been something unforgettable about her—unforgettable and very lovable.

He felt, in spite of the fact that she was lost to him, she was very near at times. It was as if she reached out to him often in her thoughts.

One night he went out to visit a patient shortly after nine, on foot, because Wanda had gone to the theater in the car.

It had been raining all day, and when he started back a downpour had set in again, a cold, driving rain that washed the streets and drenched the few pedestrians about.

There was not an empty taxi in sight; Marlton turned up his coat collar and hurried along.

Leach removed his dripping overcoat in the hall.

"There's a visitor to see you, Dr. Marlton," he said. "I showed her into the library."

"What name?" asked Marlton.

"Miss Sherry, I think. She's the young person who called and left the violets."

Marlton wasted no more time. He turned toward the library, walking with those swift strides which Cherry had burlesqued so comically in the hospital.

A small drenched figure sat huddled in a big upright chair by the door. As the doctor came in, she got up and stood swaying.

There was a little pool of water at her feet, which had dripped from her short, sodden skirts.

The pleasure he felt at seeing her again was immediately swallowed up in anxiety.

"Cherry, my dear little girl, what has happened?" he exclaimed.

Cherry raised eyes with great shad-

ows beneath them in a ghost-white face. She looked so ill that she was not even pretty now, only pathetic. Her voice was husky and her breath short.

"Monsieur, I am ill," she faltered. "I think I am going to die."

Marlton led her toward the warmth of the fire.

"I have wanted to see you so, Cherry," he told her, "ever since you went away. You're not going to be ill, my dear, and if you are, I'll make you well."

He was talking soothingly, because he saw she was indeed gravely ill and must be quieted before he could do anything for her.

She shrank away from the blaze, saying piteously:

"Monsieur, I am not cold. I burn with heat."

"You're cold outside, even if you feel hot. You must do just as I say now."

His tone was quietly authoritative. "First of all, we'll have those wet things off," he said. "How do you manage this? I see, it slips over the head. There we are! Now we'll put this shawl round your shoulders." He took the warm plaid rug off the couch and wrapped it around her. She looked such a child in her slip.

"Now, tuck down in this chair." He put her into it. "Put up your feet. We'll dry those shoes and stockings, too. Don't wriggle your feet. Do you think I've never looked after unruly little girls before?"

Cherry closed her eyes. The pain in her side was so bad.

"I think you look after little girls *perfectly*," she murmured.

He rubbed the slender feet, ice-cold like her hands; then covered them with another rug.

"Now, in a few words, tell me what's been happening," he said. He held her hand in a firm and comforting grasp; she did not know he was counting her racing pulse. She rested her curly head against his shoulder with an exhausted little sigh.

"I went down South to make pictures. It is that life from which I have run away," she began in a weak voice. Then, slowly and haltingly, the story came, from the massacre of Mee-wee, through her long persecution at Burney's hands to her final flight.

"I come to New York," she concluded, "with the money Mr. Fitch gives me. But misfortune dogged my steps. In the street I speak to a young woman who smile at me, and I ask her an address where I may stay. She offer me to share with her, and we go to a little *appartement;* but when I awake in the morning she has gone, and with her all my money and all my clothes. That was days ago, monsieur. Since then I have had nowhere to put myself, and the weather it has never ceased to snow or rain. I have not been dry for days."

"But why didn't you come to me at once?" Marlton asked.

She raised her heavy eyes to his face. All the life and sparkle had died out of them.

"If I came I thought Burney might find me and make trouble. It was only because I am so ill I might die, and so I call to say *adieu.*" She smiled wanly.

"And did you think I'd let you go away again, out into the streets?"

"I did not think of anything except that I wished to look upon your face," she answered simply.

Their eyes met and held; the man released his by an effort.

"What you need is bed, young lady, and at once," he said with an attempt

at cheerfulness. "Then a nice hot cup of milk, a night's good sleep, and you'll feel quite different in the morning."

She leaned back wearily against his arm again.

"I have no bed, monsieur, and I do not wish to be alive in the morning."

"I know. Poor Cherry! We'll make that better very soon, you'll see. I'm going to telephone a dear old nurse of mine to see if she can look after you a day or two."

He picked up the telephone, made swift arrangements with a person at the other end of the line, then turned to Cherry with a reassuring smile.

"You'll be in good hands," he said. "You're not to worry your little head about anything or any one. I'll come and see you every day, and when you're quite well we'll discuss the future, if you like. For the present, you've got to concentrate on getting well. How about putting some of these things on again? They're dry."

He helped her as though she were the little girl she looked. She was too ill to gainsay him, now that he had taken control of affairs in his calm, masterful manner.

Temporarily, at any rate, she was safe from both Burney and Von Stamp. They seemed like nightmares which Marlton had driven away.

"Monsieur, I fear I am a nuisance," she faltered. "Would it not be better if I went?"

"You'd be a nuisance if you did," he answered, trying to speak lightly; "because I'd have all the trouble of finding you again. Now we'll call a taxi and bundle you off into that little bed and take away your clothes so you can't escape. Frightened?"

She put her hand in his. A gleam of the old light came into her eyes.

"Monsieur, where you were, I should never be afraid," she answered fervently.

IN less than twenty minutes, Marlton had conveyed Cherry to the little apartment where his old nurse, Nana, lived. She adored him. In her fond eyes there was no one like him in the world.

He waited in the living room while she got the girl undressed and between warm sheets, and then he saw her alone.

"I'm afraid she's going to be ill, Nana," he said, "and I didn't think a hospital would quite meet her case. We'll get a trained nurse in to help, if necessary. She's contracted a severe chill, and her temperature's high. I'm hoping we can stave off pneumonia, but I'm not sure."

"I'll look after her, Master Hugh." Nana detected the anxiety behind his outward calm. "Didn't I pull you round with croup when you were three? Would you like to see the little girl again before you go?"

"No, I won't go back," he replied. "She'll sleep—I gave her a bromide. I'll be round very early in the morning, though. Good night, Nana, and thank you. I knew you'd do what you could."

"Don't thank *me*, Master Hugh," she repudiated. "*I've* got reason to thank *you* for all you've done for me—pensioning me off and giving me a little place to live in, as if I was a duchess."

Marlton patted her shoulders, bent through stooping over many cradles.

"And how's the missus, Master Hugh?"

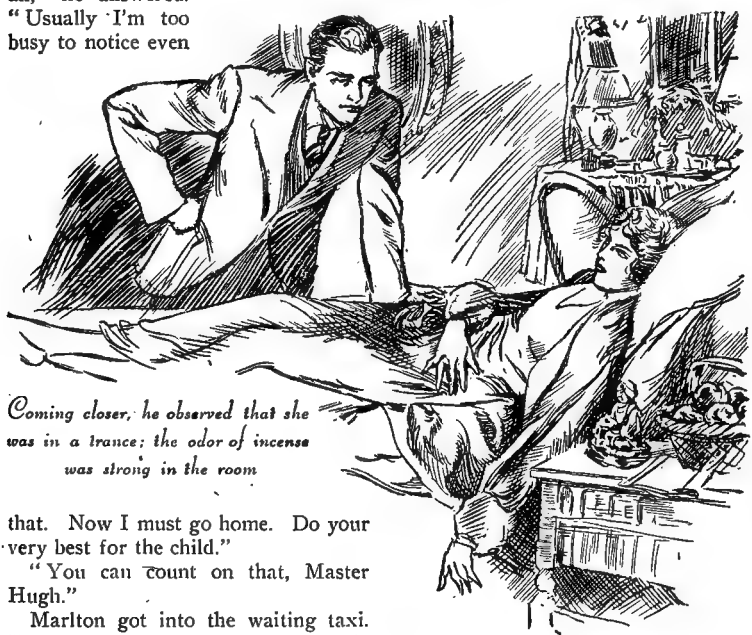
"Mrs. Marlton is very well indeed, thanks. She's going abroad for the winter in three days," he answered.

There was a brief silence. Nana scanned the rugged face, in which she

could still glimpse the baby and the boy she had nursed, with her short-sighted, love-seeing eyes. Then she sighed.

"Sometimes I've thought you looked as if you weren't happy, my bairn," she said.

"Lonely sometimes, Nana, that's all," he answered. "Usually I'm too busy to notice even that. Now I must go home. Do your very best for the child."



Coming closer, he observed that she was in a trance; the odor of incense was strong in the room

"You can count on that, Master Hugh."

Marlton got into the waiting taxi. He reached home precisely as Wanda arrived upon the step. She had got rid of her noisy friends for once and was alone.

"Hello, have you been out all evening?" she greeted him. "You'll kill yourself with work, Hugh. And there's no need. You're a great consulting surgeon, yet you spend half your time dodging about looking after people like an ordinary doctor!"

She preceded him into the study and poked up the logs into a bright blaze.

"I'm like a cat," she remarked. "I'm wide awake at night. Shall we sit and talk for a bit?"

Marlton was looking tired, but other people's troubles never bothered her. She was like a cat, too, in the sense that she formed no deep attachments, and cared only for her own comforts.

"I'm going straight to bed," he replied. "I'm rather fagged."

"Unsociable, you mean. You never have much to say to me. Is it any wonder I keep flitting off? My friends are always wondering how I can stick it as I do."

"I suppose you have your reasons," he remarked dryly.

"At present, yes," she answered cryptically. "I might go off the deep end one of these days, though. I want money—oodles and oodles of it—so, if I meet a multi-millionaire in Egypt, you'll know what to expect. Jealous?"

"No." Marlton was only filled with distaste. "I'm rather sorry for you, that's all. You may overreach yourself some day and get hurt."

"Oh, no, I shan't!" She stretched out her brocaded shoes to the blaze, the jeweled buckles on them scintillating in the light. "Once again, I'm like a pussy, you see. Even if I do fall—it's on my feet. How would you like to be free again, Hugh?" she asked.

"I haven't considered it," he replied coldly.

"Well, you might, because it's just possible," she informed him. "I'm feeling like a change. I'm not actually giving notice, but I'm looking out. I'm not a sticker, Hugh."

"I never supposed you were," Marlton answered.

She looked at him under her eyelashes.

"Going to stop my trip to Egypt now? It wouldn't be any use."

"I'm perfectly aware of that," he returned. "Don't you think we've talked long enough?"

"If you like," she assented.

They rose, and for a moment she laid her white hand on his arm. "You've been a good sport to me, Hugh," she said, "and sometimes I'm sorry that I can't be different."

XVII

IN the days that followed his wife's departure, Marlton was by no means sure that Cherry would get better. Her life hung by a thread. Pneumonia had developed, as he had feared, and the fever reduced her to a mere shadow of herself. Besides Nana, a trained nurse was helping to fight the uneven battle she was too weak to wage herself. Marlton was constantly in attendance at her bedside, but she did not even know him now. All night she tossed in delirium; by day she lay in a dazed torpor. There was no saying which way things would go.

On the night of the crisis, Marlton never left her side at all. He sat there hour after hour, his cool, light fingers on her pulse, watching for the first signs of returning consciousness, never taking his eyes off the wan little face, so woefully altered by the illness.

He had sent the faithful Nana to bed for a few hours, much against her will. The night nurse sat in a low chair by the shaded lamp. Toward daybreak they saw the crisis was at hand.

Cherry's eyes opened, and there was recognition in them at last. She made a little beckoning gesture with her fingers.

He bent over her.

"Yes, dear? What is it?"

She was trying to thank him. He caught little words of gratitude, of apology for the trouble she had caused. His heart was heavy. There were many shadows in the room, and among them the gray presence he had tried to keep away. She was aware of it herself, and unafraid. Her parched lips formed the words. "Monsieur, it is very dark here."

"It will be light soon," he said.

The little fingers stroked his hand.

"Monsieur, I have seen my sainted mother," she whispered. "She has come to take me away. Can you not see her also, monsieur?"

"No, Cherry," he replied. "But if she's there, will you give her a mes-

sage? Tell her I'd like to protect you from the bad people and look after you myself, if she will trust you to me."

There was a pause. In her own tongue, Cherry's voice murmured faintly.

"She inclines her head, monsieur. She smiles. She is very happy now. She has vanished. What does it mean? Will she not return again?"

Marlton's fingers were still on the threadlike pulse. He was counting. The beats were just perceptibly fuller and steadier. The tide was coming in at last—after all.

"It means she understands you have work to do here, dear," he said. "She knows you are going to be well looked after, and she is content. I am very happy, too," he said.

The shadowed eyes asked a question.

"You are going to get well, beyond the slightest doubt," he answered, and beckoned to the nurse. Dawn was in the room at last; the shadows were definitely gone.

Cherry's eyes closed. She had fallen into a health-giving, tranquil sleep.

The nurse smiled, but tears stood in her eyes. The tension of the last few days had been so great.

"We've pulled her through, Dr. Marlton," she whispered. "Now go home and get some rest yourself."

He could not think of relaxing yet.

"I'll stay in the other room, in case I'm wanted," he said. "She may ask for me when she wakes up."

Cherry slept for five hours, and awoke at ten in the morning. Her mind was clear enough, although she was unaware how many days or weeks she had been ill. She asked for Marlton, and the nurse went to call him at once.

"It's a wonderful recovery, doctor!" She was beaming. "She asked if she might sit up to-day, if you please!"

Marlton went back into the room with quick strides, and Cherry laughed as he came toward her. Although he had not slept for nights, he felt extraordinarily light-hearted, too.

"Well, how's the patient?" he asked, bending over her. "Ever so much better, I can see. No, you certainly can't sit up this morning, Mlle. Impatience. In fact, you couldn't if you tried. You've been very ill, and given us all an anxious time. Now we need a rest as well as you."

She made a little face.

"Oh, monsieur, your doctor's manner is of a seriousness, but the eyes of you are like my star! They twinkle and dance. Is it because you are glad I have recovered?"

"Very glad, indeed." He sat down by the bed. "I don't like losing patients. Besides, while you've been ill, I've been making all kinds of plans for you, and if you'd decided to slip off, as you seemed bent on doing, I'd have been most annoyed."

She smiled back at him.

"I also am glad to find myself here, although my head is puzzled. I cannot put it all together in my mind."

"I brought you here," Marlton said. "You needn't go farther back than that. We must think only of pleasant things now."

She sighed happily.

"It is easy to think of the pleasant things when you are near. To look upon your face gives me so much joy."

"Even when my face needs shaving?" he asked.

"It is because you are so ugly that I like it," she explained. "When I gaze upon you, monsieur, I am reminded of a rock that is so strong. If, in

the future, I become famous upon the stage, no longer will it be to please myself, but in order that you might say: 'That is Cherry, my friend,' and be proud."

Marlton patted the little, almost transparent hand lying upon the counterpane.

"Those are very sweet words, dear," he said. "Acting is your gift; and when you're strong, perhaps I may help you in that way as well."

Her eyes lit up like stars.

"But then I should be in your debt even more than now," she replied. "If I take so much, is there nothing I can also give to you?"

Marlton got up from his chair. "Rest and get well," he said. "That will please me best of all."

CHERRY'S convalescence proceeded by leaps and bounds. Her spirits soared. She lived in the present only, where Marlton and his care of her filled her life like the sun. She loved everybody—the bright-faced nurse, dear Nana, whose great delight it was to talk about Marlton by the hour and Cherry's to listen; his sister, Mrs. Kenton, who was a frequent visitor; and, most of all, Marlton himself, whom she now regarded more than ever as the most wonderful person in the world.

Burney, with his cruelties, faded from her mind, although she still would dream of him sometimes and cry out in terror.

Only once did she allude to him, and that was one day when Marlton had said she might get up for a few hours and dress.

"Monsieur, I would like to ask you a question," she said. "While I have been ill, have there been any callers for me? It seems strange that the bad man, Burney, has not followed in my steps."

"No one," he answered. "If this unpleasant person ever turns up, you needn't be afraid, because I'll deal with him myself."

She took out a package wrapped in tissue paper from beneath her pillow, and shyly put it into his hands.

"I thought you might be pleased to wear these slipper-shoes in the evenings, when your feet are weary," she said. "I made them myself. Do you approve of the color and the design, monsieur?"

For a moment, the color and the design took Marlton's breath away. There was revealed to his startled gaze a pair of crimson velvet slippers embroidered with blue forget-me-nots and true-lover's knots in gold thread, as well as his monogram in the center of each toe. She had also worked the American Flag on the left heel and the tricolor of France upon the right.

Cherry watched his face eagerly, and not for worlds would he have let her see that he was dying not to laugh. Leach, his man, would almost faint upon the spot, when he brought those ornate slippers home.

"You are pleased? You think them beautiful?" Cherry queried.

"Wonderful!" he replied. "I don't know how to thank you, dear. Why, you must have worn out your little fingers, working all that!"

She smiled contentedly.

"Occasionally I pricked myself and bled," she admitted. "But no art is achieved without some pain. And I do not think you could buy such slipper-shoes if you searched all the shops in New York," she added proudly.

"I'm certain you couldn't," he agreed. "I'll treasure them always, Cherry."

"But you will also wear them?" she took him up quickly. "When they are worn out, I will make you another pair. Always it will be my diversion to keep you in slipper-shoes."

Marlton made a heroic resolve.

"Of course I'll wear them," he assured her. "And thank you again for the pretty gift."

As he spoke, he leaned over and kissed her. It was the first time.

Like a child, she turned her face to receive it; but as his lips touched hers, a color like a wild rose crept into her cheeks. While he hesitated, Nana came in.

"You said Cherry might get up for a little while, Master Hugh," she reminded him. "So, if you can wait while I help her to dress, she can have tea with you. It's all ready now, and I've made a sponge cake and iced it, to celebrate her first day up."

"That's splendid," Marlton said. "Of course I'll wait."

He went into the next room and sat down, surveying the table Nana had laid so temptingly. It reminded him of the nursery repasts of bygone days. She had even provided a glass of his favorite quince jelly.

Cherry seemed to be a long while over her toilette.

Then Nana appeared in the doorway, alone.

"If you please, Master Hugh, Cherry won't come in," she said. "She can't wear her dress, she says. She wanted to look pretty, bless her heart, and she's afraid you'll laugh at her."

Marlton smiled indulgently.

"Cherry!" he called over his shoulder. "Don't be a silly child. Come right along. What's the matter with your frock? Let me see."

There was no answer in words, only the sound of reluctant footsteps; and then Cherry appeared. The childish serge tunic which Burney had bought her was short by several inches everywhere. Being of the cheapest material, it had shrunk through the drenching received when its wearer had been wandering in the streets. Her appearance was causing her the greatest chagrin, for big tears stood in her eyes.

"*Hélas!*" she cried. "I am a perfect scarecrow! See, I resemble a spider monkey, all legs and arms! I am ashamed to appear before you so!"

Marlton got up, and taking her hand pulled her gently into the room.

"Dear little Cherry, don't worry about the dress," he consoled her. "We'll soon make that all right. Mrs. Kenton shall take you shopping and fit you out with everything you need: sailor suits and party frocks and all the clothes a little girl ought to have."

Nana took her seat at the head of the table, and commenced to pour the tea.

"Now, children," she said, "take your seats, please. Master Hugh, will you cut the cake?"

XVIII

MARLTON was as good as his word. He had a conversation with his sister that evening concerning Cherry and her wardrobe, the result of which was that Dorothy agreed to outfit her as soon as she was well enough.

They also discussed her future. Dorothy advised him to send Cherry to the Academy of Dramatic Art, the best institution of its kind.

Mrs. Kenton never did anything by halves. Because she had taken to her brother's protégée at once, she became whole heartedly her friend. She took Cherry away for a change of air, and went with her on their return to the

examination of candidates at the Academy, through which she passed with flying colors.

It was her suggestion that an apartment should be taken for Cherry nearer to her work, and it was she who made the final selection of a dainty little suite.

It would not be long, Dorothy felt convinced, judging by the opinions of those who were qualified to judge, before her feet would be firmly set on the first rung of the theatrical ladder.

Her days had been so full of work that she had scarcely seen Marlton. He had looked in during the evenings for a few minutes once or twice, to find her enveloped in a smock, busily helping Nana cook.

Cherry was to move into the little apartment on her birthday, upon which occasion Marlton was to take her out to dinner and a theater for a special treat.

When he rang up Cherry to tell her about it, even over the wire he could hear she was breathlessly excited. "I am so full up with happiness," she said. "I cannot keep myself still. I will start to dress this very instant!"

"Hold on a minute, Cherry!" Marlton was smiling. "You don't need to start dressing at one o'clock in the afternoon, dear. I said seven to-night. Take a taxi, and you'll find me waiting for you at the restaurant. Better put on a party frock, if you have one."

A funny little noise came over the wire. It sounded like a suppressed giggle.

"*Mais oui*, monsieur, I have a pink dress of satin," she replied. "I think you'll be pleased to see me in it—and others also," she added; "when I was fitted into it, I could not take my own eyes off myself."

"Don't take my breath away, though," Marlton laughed, as he put down the receiver.

When he got home that night, it was almost time to dress.

Turning his letters over, he found one from Wanda, and opened it with a faint reluctance. The postmark, to his surprise, was Paris, not Egypt.

MY DEAR HUGH,

I told you it was quite likely I might meet someone in Egypt who could give me pots of money and a good time, so you won't be altogether surprised at this.

Ali Bahmey Bey is an Egyptian prince, and as soon as you set me free, which I hope you'll do without loss of time before he gets tired of me, I shall be the princess. I always wanted a title. I don't suppose this will upset you very much, only you won't like the publicity of a divorce. It won't worry me much, and after all I shall be the one in fault, so when you've got over the first shock, do file whatever it's called and waste no time.

Ali and I will be coming over from Paris soon, and if you wish it, would meet you to talk it all over in a friendly way.

WANDA.

Marlton stood very still, reading and re-reading the carelessly worded missive, while the bitterness of utter disillusion ate into his soul.

He placed the letter back in its envelope, with an almost physical distaste. The whole affair sickened and saddened him. Knowing Wanda for what she was, too late, he had still done his best to make her happy. It had not been enough, that was all. She was a woman who would go on and on, using men as her stepping stones.

She was right in her estimate that he would not relish the publicity of a divorce. The whole idea was repugnant to him, although he knew he must see it through to give her the freedom she desired.

Stunned by the news, he stood there thinking until Leach came to remind him it was time to dress.

The doctor started and came to himself.

Time to dress—for whom, for what?

Then he remembered that Cherry would be waiting for him and that it was her birthday party.

XIX

MARLTON made up his mind not to spoil Cherry's evening by letting her see he was out of spirits. Once the wretched affair was over and done with, he could and must forget it.

He arrived at their rendezvous a few minutes early, and stood near the entrance waiting. Cherry arrived punctual to the minute—indeed, she had been ready a whole hour before it was time to start. Marlton, who had expected to see a little girl in a party frock, had to look twice before he was sure it was she.

A change such as he was totally unprepared for had taken place. The child of yesterday had vanished, never to return. In her place was a radiant young queen, lovely to look on, exquisitely arrayed. As he gazed upon her, startled, the affection he had felt for the child was swallowed up in the surge of a mighty emotion which marked the birth of man's love for a woman; the revelation came upon him in a few blinding seconds.

With beating heart, he went forward to meet her; while she, in a flutter of delight, quickened her steps into a little run. The roses in her cheeks matched the wonderful frock she wore beneath the silver tissue opera cloak he took from her pretty shoulders. Cut rather high in front and low in the back, with a swirl of skirt almost to the ground, and a sweeping sash caught on one hip in an enormous bow, the pink satin was a very poem of a dress.

She was terribly anxious to hear what Marlton thought of her, and his silence filled her with apprehension lest he might disapprove after all.

"Oh, monsieur," she cried, "tell me how you like the frock! I am on key-hooks until I hear."

Marlton found his voice then.

"My dear, you're lovely—and so is your frock," he hastened to assure her. "I told you not to take my breath away, but you have! I thought you were a little girl; and I find a princess out of a fairy tale."

She gave a little skip of delight.

"Oh, I am so overjoyed. And now, my hunger is enormous."

Marlton smiled. She was not so grown-up, after all!

"Then let's go in," he said, and led her up the shallow, carpeted steps into the restaurant. As the headwaiter showed them to their table, he could not help seeing that she and her frock were the admiration of every one in view.

Cherry, however, was not in the least abashed. She was enchanted with everything. Happiness streamed from her, and Marlton almost forgot his own troubles as her dancing eyes met his.

After they were served he said, "Since it's your birthday, I have a little present for you. I hope it will fit you."

He placed a little velvet ring case in her hand.

Cherry opened it, exclaiming with delight. It was a pearl set in platinum and surrounded with small diamonds. Quite unthinkingly, she slipped it on the third finger of her left hand.

"You mustn't wear it on that finger, Cherry," Marlton said. "That's where your sweetheart will put a ring some day."

She made a pouting face, and shook her dark curls.

"My sweetheart? But, no, monsieur. I could never love any one beside yourself."

He smiled, but there was sadness close behind it.

"You say that because you are still a little girl in your heart, dear," he answered. "Some day the lord of your life—your fairy prince—will come along."

"You are my dear lord," she declared solemnly. "I am altogether yours in my heart. Is it because I am your adopted?"

He bit his lips.

"I haven't adopted you yet, dear. I'm not sure I ought to, now. Until to-night, I always thought you were a little girl, which made things easier. Now I find you—" He pulled himself up. It would not be wise to tell her exactly what she was to him.

She cupped her chin in her hands.

"How do you find me, monsieur?" she inquired. "Please to tell me."

"A beautiful young woman, full of allure," he answered hesitantly.

She pondered the statement gravely.

"But you do not like me so?" she persisted. "I am not so nice?"

"Nicer—in some ways," he answered. "Cherry we'll be late for the theater. You don't want to miss any of the show. Aren't you going to eat your dinner?"

LATER, as they entered their stage box, in semi-darkness, Cherry childishly placed her soft hand in her companion's. A glow went through him, and involuntarily his fingers closed over it hard. The next moment he took his hand away; he had heard her gasp.

"Cherry, I'm sorry. I hurt your poor little hand." he apologized.

She raised a half-puzzled face to his. In the gloom he could see a look of mystification in her dark eyes.

"It was not so much a hurt," she replied, "but a strange sensation, my dear lord." The three words of endearment she would always keep especially for him now, fell from her lips like a caress. "When you clasped my hand I felt my heart beat faster. Is it another illness, do you think?"

"You'll quiet down, dear. You're a little excited to-night, that's all," he answered, patting the small hand reassuringly.

She leaned forward eagerly in her seat as the curtain rose.

TO watch Pauline Mayo act was nearly as great an experience to Marlton as it was for Cherry. The haunting beauty of the great actress's face, the power and passion of her voice, carried them both away. This was more than art: it was real. Into the tragedy of the play Pauline poured out soul and spirit. Only when the curtain fell did Cherry drag her eyes from the stage. It rose again and again as the actress took call after call.

When she came forward for the last time, her eyes swept upward. She caught sight of the young girl leaning half out of the stage box, and their eyes met. The star smiled faintly.

Cherry kissed her hands. She could not help it. She turned to Marlton as the curtain fell.

"To act like that," she said, "would be my dream. It would make up for anything—even for a life without love."

"Do you think so?" Marlton whispered huskily. "But Love won't miss you, dear—my dear. He couldn't. When you were born he set his seal on your brow and lips and whispered, *'Wait for me.'*"

XX

AFTER a training that was comparatively short, Cherry was given a chance on the stage. Basil Green, producer and manager, came to the school seeking new talent, and selected her as the most promising for a small rôle in his new play.

At rehearsal she proved herself a hard worker and an untiring student. She put her whole heart and soul into abstracting every ounce out of the part. Green, who was an artist to his finger tips, was the man to help and encourage her. He took as much pains with her as he did with his principals. So, when the curtain rang up on the first night of "Love and Let Me Go," Cherry's little rôle was as finished as technique could make it. In addition, her own natural gift illuminated it like a lamp.

She succeeded brilliantly, wonderfully. Hanan Alexander, greatest of critics, sat up like a ramrod as soon as she had spoken her first line, and watched her the whole time she was on the stage. His praise of her in his newspaper the next day set her upon a platform of her own. She was a very young girl, but she had genius, technique, temperament. She was an actress to be taken note of, who would go far. It was a wonderful review for a new actress, and she deserved every word of it.

When the curtain had rung up and down for the third time, a muffled clamor came through it, increasing every minute. Cherry was standing in the wings. The leading lady had just handed her one of her own bouquets, with an exuberant kiss.

"That's for you, my dear. You were lovely," she said. "You inspired me as well."

Then Basil Green came up hurriedly and pulled her along.

"Come on, Cherry. It's you they want!" he cried. "They'll have to see you or they won't go home! Listen to them shouting for you!"

The girl hung back. She was nervous now. The thunder down in front made her heart beat.

"They call for the author," she replied.

"They've had the author. He's gone home. It's *Althea* they want. Now, just go and smile at them and say thank you."

But Cherry's feet remained riveted to the floor. Green had to drag her on by force by one hand, and the leading lady took the other.

Even then she could not speak. She simply held out her hands in a little mute gesture of thanks. Then, in a box she caught sight of Mrs. Kenton with her husband, and Marlton, her own dear lord, who would be proud of her to-night.

Her one desire was to hear his voice, his quiet praise and pleasure, instead of all this tumultuous clapping.

As soon as she was dressed, Mrs. Kenton and the two men came behind to take her out to supper; then Marlton, with an eye for her health, insisted on her leaving early, and himself escorted Cherry home.

"Tired?" he asked, as they drove along in the car and she leaned back with a contented little sigh.

"Yes—a bit. And my head also feels full of feathers. Is it that I have become intoxicated, would you say?"

"With success, perhaps. Isn't that it?"

She rested her cheek against the smooth texture of his coat sleeve.

"I am, oh, so happy, because you will believe in me now!" she murmured.

He drew her little hand in his.

"I've always believed in you, Cherry," he answered, "and I always shall."

"But if I had made a failure, you'd have been disappointed?" she queried.

"On your account, yes—not my own. You will never look back now, Cherry. Basil Green told Dorothy that you've a great future before you. Are you cold, dear?" He wrapped her cloak more closely round her as she shivered a little.

"Not cold," she replied. "I was only thinking that to be great is sometimes lonely, *n'est-ce pas?* For instance, to-night at my door we say good night. It shuts to; you go home. The shoutings and the clappings have died away, and in my heart there is sadness, because I can't be with you. Would you like me to be always with you?"

"Very much indeed, dear. Only it isn't possible," he answered.

"Why not possible?" she asked.

"Because I love you too much," he answered, suddenly articulate. "I love you so much that I should want you for my wife."

"*Your wife!*" She echoed the words faintly, so musically that they sounded as though she sang them. "Oh, my dear, dear lord, assure me that I am not dreaming! Say it once more, that I may repeat it to myself all right."

Marlton said it again.

"And I never meant to tell you. It wasn't fair of me," he reproached himself.

Cherry swayed toward him, and the lurching of the car as it turned a corner almost threw them into each other's arms. Marlton had to fight hard not to crush her to him. She wanted him to; he knew it. That made it harder still.

"Why not fair?" she queried. "Since you have told me, I am in heaven; for all this while my heart has ached. My dear lord, the car stops. We are here!" she exclaimed. "Will you not come in and kiss me good night?"

Half innocent, half woman that she was, her sweetness almost subjugated him; but the angel that is in some men stood by his side.

"Darling, I can't," he answered. "I want to kiss you so much that if I began I'd never stop. I must not take you in my arms until I am free. I want to set you on a throne, Cherry, not to pull you down. We must wait for each other, dear."

"But, of course," she answered practically. "I can also wait. My dear lord, please to tell me you are happy now that we have seen into each other's hearts this night."

"Very, very happy," he answered. She closed her eyes.

"I also. Good night, my love, my well-beloved."

"Good night, my precious!"

Marlton crushed the little hand in his. It was hard to let her go, but he did it.

Cherry ran in, singing beneath her breath. Her maid was waiting up, and Cherry reproached her for not going to bed.

"Never forfeit your rest on my account, Mary," she said. "Place the coffeepot at hand and I will myself put to bed."

"Thank you, miss, but I was nerv-

ous, and couldn't sleep, anyhow," the girl answered. "A man called, asking for you—a great, hulking beast, smelling so strong of drink and looking like a devil. He could have knocked me down and walked right in."

Cherry's hand went to her breast; her eyes widened with fear.

"Describe him. What was he like?" she asked sharply.

"Ugly—as I've said. Well, more wicked than ugly. A great big fellow, with his hat on one side, and a coat with a fur collar—rather flashy and full of bounce."

Cherry recognized the description at once: Burney had turned up.

"What did you say to him? Is he hiding here now?" She looked around her fearfully.

"Why, no, miss," the girl answered. "I saw he couldn't be any one you knew, so I said you didn't live here any more."

"And did he ask any questions?" Cherry gasped.

"No. He swore, and went away," the maid replied. "Let me help you undress, miss. Why, you're trembling like a leaf!"

XXI

FOR the next few days Cherry lived upon "key-hooks," to use her own expression. Every ring at the bell, every knock at the door, made her jump.

A week passed, and the menace began to fade from her mind; then one Sunday evening, as she sat alone reading over a part, there came a sound which sent her heart into her mouth. It was a double knock at the door, but she knew it. Nobody but Burney knocked like that.

She got to her feet somehow, dropping the script she had been studying.

Her terror-stricken eyes went to the door. Should she open it? Must she? Or, if she stood there silent, would he give it up and go away?

A second, more violent onslaught made it only too apparent that, far from going away, the visitor did not intend to be kept waiting.

Cherry felt as though she must suffocate, her heart was beating so.

"Who is there?" she called faintly, although she knew only too well.

The toe of a boot on the door panel answered that.

Half hypnotized by fear, Cherry opened the door, and stood back, shrinking against the wall as he stalked in.

As usual, he had had too much to drink. A huge, rank cigar was stuck in his mouth, and he strolled round her small domain without saying a word, finally coming to a pause before her, puffing a cloud of smoke into her face and laughing derisively.

"Well, Cherry, you lemon! Here I am, and here's where I collect! You've led me a dance, you have, all over France and back! Fitch told me he'd advised you to go there—threw a red herring on the trail on purpose, I'll be bound. I'm going to make it hot for everybody who's mixed up with you, and show 'em how dangerous it is to steal a French baby from her lawful guardian. There's going to be the devil to pay all round!"

He rubbed his hands.

Cherry's cold panic was beginning to simmer now. Hot anger was superseding fear.

"Beast!" she exclaimed. "You dare not harm me! How dare you make an entrance to my home? I'll call the janitor to throw you away."

"He'd have a job!" Burney stuck his hands in his pockets. "Temper

just as flashy as ever, I see. Well, now, explain all this." He waved his arm around the daintily furnished room. "Got any booze about the place? I'm thirsty."

"I have some beverages, yes."

Disdainfully Cherry took out a decanter and a siphon from the cupboard. The decanter contained a rosy-colored liquid, but Burney was color-blind. He helped himself liberally, and tossed half the contents off in a gulp. Then he sat up, making a dreadful face, glared at Cherry and shuddered and choked.

"What do you mean by it, you little devil?" he spluttered. "You're trying to poison me, that's what you are! Why, it tastes like the stuff they give to babies when they've got the colic! I'm ill! I'm feeling sick!"

"The beverage is perfectly wholesome, and I drink it myself always," Cherry replied. "Had I wished to poison you I could have done so in the past, when I prepared your food."

"I dare say you'll be cooking for me again one of these days, for a treat. Now, what have you been doing since you gave me the slip? Stick to the truth!"

AS he spoke, Burney lounged over to the daintily upholstered davenport and threw his huge frame down upon it, sticking up his muddy boots upon a silken cushion.

Cherry remained standing where she was, white with anger.

"Please to remove your filthy boots from my cushions," she requested. "They are intended to rest the head."

"Well, I use 'em for the feet. I've got blood pressure, and I'm supposed to put them up whenever I can," Burney replied. "Get on with your story. Where did you go?"

"I came to New York."

"I see. Then I suppose you paid a call on your favorite doctor—or did you look up the fishman first?"

Cherry scorned him with her eyes.

"I was ill. When I got well, the doctor and his sister helped me learn to act, and now I am on the stage."

"H'm! Very pretty!" Burney murmured sarcastically. "And what salary do you get, may I ask?"

"I am in receipt of fifty dollars a week," she replied proudly.

"And you expect me to swallow that that pays for all this?" His eyes roved round the pretty room. "You must think I'm a nit-wit." He continued threateningly: "I shouldn't like to be in the shoes of this johnny who enticed you away from your good, kind, lawful guardian. That's a serious offense, punishable by several years in stir. It's a sad thing to see such a young girl as you led away, and it's my bounden duty to see he's brought to book." Burney was beginning to enjoy himself as he saw the anguish upon Cherry's face. "I'm going to ruin him for this," he declared. "Unless—" He paused. Cherry was leaning forward, her face drained of color, hanging upon his every word now, alive to only one thing, that her dear lord's honor, integrity and peace of mind were being menaced by this great blackguard sprawling upon her sofa, whose claim upon her was backed by the stern law of the Constitution itself or so he had made her believe.

"Please to say what you wish me to do," she faltered. "I would not harm my friend for all the world."

"Now we can begin to talk!" exclaimed Burney triumphantly, and took his feet off the cushions and planted them on the floor once more. "I'm ready to come to terms if you'll be

sensible. I'll let bygones be bygones if you'll do as I say: quit this outfit instanter and come along with me, back to the movies where you belong, leaving no address behind."

"To act under Herr Von Stamp? Burney, I would rather die!" she cried.

"That contract's cancelled." Burney's eyes shifted from her face. "He's found another star by now. I've got no plans beyond getting to Hollywood. Are you coming with me like a good girl, or would you rather the band began to play for your darling doctor friend? I'll give you five minutes to decide."

"But how can I go upon the moment?" she argued desperately. "I must make my farewells. There is also my notice to give in at the Academy and the theater."

"Notice be blowed! You'll fade, that's all. You can leave a letter behind if you like. Now, don't waste your breath talking; I've lost enough time as it is. I'm a man of action, I am."

He took out his watch. Three minutes passed. Cherry stood in an agony of indecision. She was not experienced enough to see that the fellow was merely bluffing. She had a lurid vision of Marlton in a prison cell and herself as directly responsible. She could not, must not bring all this trouble upon him. Far, far better go through it herself.

"Four minutes," said Burney, lifting his eyes from his watch.

Cherry's bosom was heaving, her breath coming in sobs. She felt bursting with emotion. She wished that she might die.

To go away and suffer herself . . . What other decision could she come to? But, because he loved her, her dear lord must be made unhappy, too! Unless she made it seem that she was undeserving after all, a young person with a designing mind, as Dorothy had said his wife had been. In that way he would suffer least, if she could make him think she was not worth while.

"Time's up," said Burney shortly, and put his watch back into his pocket.

The misery in Cherry's face was pitiful to see. It would have melted a stone, but not Burney.

"Well?" he said.

She faced him with despair in her eyes.

"I will come with you!" she cried. "Depart now, and I will be ready in a quarter of an hour."

HE burst into a loud guffaw. "So I'm to wait outside while you pop out another door! I'm not so green as all that," he said. "I'll stay while you get ready, my pretty dear. When you are, I'll call a taxi; so now you can pack all your fine clothes."

She set her lips.

"I shall bring only what I need upon a journey. Whatever has been given me, I leave behind."

"Well, that's damn silly," he retorted. "Your clothes won't be any use to any one else. Your fancy man can't wear skirts. You'll want to cut a dash in Hollywood. You pack up the lot, and hurry."

He lit another noxious weed and put his feet up on the cushions again.

Cherry went into the next room. She felt like one who is under sentence of death. To have been found and dragged off by Burney was almost worse. And yet there was no alternative. She might have defied him and appealed to Marlton, but that would bring such dire trouble upon the latter that she would far rather efface her-

self. For a short while she had known such happiness as she had never dreamed of. Now it was over. Even her little success upon the stage must go.

She gathered a few necessities together in one small suitcase, leaving all the rest, while hot, scalding tears rained down her cheeks. Then she sat down to write her farewell letter to the man she loved—a letter that must make him think she was no good.

She dipped her pen in the ink and wrote, while the tears continued to rain down and ran into her letters as she formed them.

DOCTOR HUGH,

No doubt you will be surprised that I go. I have a grand offer and so I return to the movies. This life will be too dull for me and I require a gay time with much more pleasure. Please do not try to discover me. I am about to travel.

So far, so good—or so dreadful. But she could not continue in that vein. Her breaking heart took command of the rest of her words and she finished the letter with a burst of emotion.

Therefore I say adieu. Never can I thank you for all your so great goodness, but always I will remember it; and every day, though years pass, my thoughts will be desiring your happiness.

Please to forgive me, my dear lord, and think no more of your unworthy

CHERRY.

She could not see her own signature; she wrote it through a mist of tears.

Love's Heaven

DEAR heart of mine, you lift me from the shadows
Within the mystic splendor of your eyes,
Then lo, ere I am knowing, earth has vanished
And we are walking ways of Paradise!

—Edgar Daniel Kramer

One of the oak panels had swung outward, and from the dark opening a man was advancing toward her

Midnight of Dreams

When the clock struck twelve on her wedding night Linda knew two things: she did not love her husband, and—he did not love her!

By Fay Hunt

LINDA paused despairingly on the shadowy big veranda. No, of course she could not run away.

What madness! But her heart was sick with doubts, and the wedding ring so newly placed on her finger seemed made of tons of lead.

"A strange house," she thought, "and a man whom I no longer trust! No, no—it can't be that way!"

Linda shivered a little, though the September evening was warm. Beyond the veranda she could see the trees of the surrounding park outlined against the rising moon. Within the dim hallway there was visible a rec-

tangle of light from the partly open library door.

Courtney was there, with the lawyer who had come to arrange the last details in regard to Courtney's inheritance. For this was Courtney's twenty-fifth birthday, and, by the terms of his eccentric uncle's will, to-day the vast Graham estate became his. Linda had heard their voices droning over dry legal details when she had come down the stairs in that mad, momentary impulse of flight.

"Surely he loves me," she argued now with herself. "Else why did he marry me?"

She realized that she had not been entirely sure of her own heart. "But what girl ever is?" she thought. "Or are they? What do I know about it? Only that I am lost—afraid—"

Her thoughts went back over the events of the last few hours. The wedding at her father's house. Flowers, music, congratulations. Such a romantic marriage! So every one said.

Then they were alone together in Courtney's big car, speeding away from Linda's carefree girlhood to—what?

Courtney had always been very reserved, as if the real man were hidden behind a mask. But their acquaintance had been very brief, so that Linda was not troubled by this. Indeed, this very reserve seemed to add to the fascination which he had for her. She hoped and expected to find behind the mask the tender and ardent lover of her dreams.

But they were hardly out of sight of her old home before a hint of something very different appeared.

"That's done!" Courtney exclaimed in an oddly triumphant tone. "Finished! What a game!" And he began to laugh softly to himself.

Linda wanted to laugh and be happy too, but she felt only puzzled and hurt. Courtney did not seem to be thinking of her at all. He was driving very fast, sometimes humming a tune, sometimes smiling strangely to himself.

She tried a few shy words of love.

Was that a laugh of mocking indifference with which he answered her? Or was she only imagining things?

After a time he glanced at her, and the cold look in his eyes changed to one of pleased anticipation. His arm went round her, roughly possessive. Linda began to be afraid.

TREMBLING there in the shadow of Courtney's great house, she told herself again that she must have imagined these things.

At any rate, Courtney must not come out and find her here. If she was doubtful, afraid, he should never know it, she determined. She would go back up to that strange, new room—

She slipped into the dim hallway and tiptoed past the library door. They were still talking there; she could not help overhearing a sentence or two. The lawyer was speaking.

"You're a fast worker, Courtney. A month to find a bride—and you won!"

"Easy!" Courtney's laugh was disagreeably boastful.

"You were a nice lad once." The old man's tone was faintly regretful. "I earnestly hope that you are offering this girl something besides wealth. I know her family. I knew her mother. I'm certain she's not the sort who would marry for money."

"Rot! She's lucky."

Linda, paralyzed, crouched on the stairs outside, unable to move out of hearing.

"I never approved that secret clause in the will," the lawyer continued. "Your uncle was a queer one in some ways. He wanted to make sure that you would marry. And marry a girl of good family."

"That made it harder," muttered Courtney.

"The Grahams have always played fair. He never dreamed, of course, that you would not—"

"Let's get on with the business," interrupted Courtney.

"Better so, yes," agreed the lawyer wearily.

A secret clause in the will! Marriage to a girl of good family! So for that he had made love to her, deceived her! Linda's worst fears and doubts had pictured nothing so black as this.

But she could not stay forever there on the stairway. They might come out at any moment. With an effort she mastered her faintness and went slowly on up the stairs. She felt tired, inexpressibly tired, unable even to try to plan some way of escape from the trap in which she found herself.

Linda had known Courtney Graham only three weeks. It had all happened like a chapter from a fairy tale. All, Linda thought bitterly, except the happy ending.

COURTNEY was the nephew and only heir of old Clint Graham, the millionaire, who had died some years before. Courtney had suffered a breakdown from overstudy at college in Los Angeles; had been sent to Colorado to recuperate, but had never arrived at his destination. There had been an accident, his plane was found wrecked in the mountains of Arizona, but there were no traces of the boy. He disappeared completely. He had no near relatives, but after the accident friends of the family, as well as the firm of lawyers in charge of his uncle's estate, made every effort to find some trace of him. But none was found. It was supposed that he had perished from exhaustion and exposure.

Now, suddenly, nearly two years later, he had returned. He told a pathetic tale of loss of memory which accounted for his long disappearance.

He was just in time to claim his inheritance. Old friends of the Grahams gave him a royal welcome, and for days he was pursued by reporters and photographers.

He seemed well and strong, but the sudden recovery of memory and the hasty journey to his home had been a considerable strain. He had said that he needed a rest. There was yet a month before the birthday on which he would take over the administration of the Graham fortune. He had decided to spend those few weeks in some quiet place by the seashore.

And there Courtney had fallen in love at first sight with Linda Leighton. So he said!

That first meeting! Linda, a sun-tanned sprite running down the beach, stopping to examine a new sort of jellyfish washed up by the tide. Courtney strolling absently, eyes on distant sails. A collision!

"I'm so sorry—I beg your pardon."

"It's all right—you just didn't step on it."

"On what, fair mermaid?"

"Oh, it's only a pink jellyfish."

"Lucky creature, to have won your interest! But you must let me make amends for my heedlessness."

Linda had liked instantly his good looks, his courtly manner. She had agreed to let him help search for even pinker jellyfish.

It was a whirlwind courtship. Linda felt strangely attracted to this romantic young man, who wooed her with such delightful speeches, such exquisitely chosen gifts. He treated her always with an old-world deference, as if she were something very precious. She was swept away by a feeling that this was fate, that her destiny was irresistibly linked with his.

"My little girl is quite sure of her heart?" her father had asked.

"I think so," Linda hesitated.

"I don't want you to be dazzled by his wealth, Linda."

The Leightons, though of an old and distinguished family, had never possessed riches.

"No, no, father. It's himself alone. I feel as if the world would end if he went away. As if I had no choice but to follow him. I don't know, but I think it must be love."

Linda spoke the truth when she said that Courtney's money meant nothing to her. Though of course she appreciated the romance of it, that this young millionaire should fall in love with the daughter of a comparatively poor man.

She had not wished to be married in such haste. But Courtney begged with all his charming persuasiveness. He wanted her to marry him on his twenty-fifth birthday, he said, so that she should share every moment of his fortune and his new life. It was a pretty idea. How could Linda refuse?

So here she was, in this strange new house which had suddenly become a prison.

SHE sat long before her mirror. In its glimmering surface she seemed to see a procession of years, the long, cruel years of a loveless marriage. Was there no way out?

Courtney! A man who would stop at nothing to gain his ends. What play-acting there had been on his part! What blindness on hers! Even that first meeting on the sands must have been intentional. He had selected her beforehand, cold-blooded, calculating. Oh, why had she felt so fatally attracted to him?

There was the sound of a motor from the driveway below. That would be the lawyer departing. Now Courtney would be coming up.

Linda stared hopelessly into the mirror. If only she were not so tired, she thought, she might find some way of escape. Useless to try, reason told her. Courtney must keep her in order to keep his inheritance. For a time anyway. He was clever and ruthless. What could she do?

If only she had gone on into the night instead of coming up from the veranda! It was too late now; he might be coming up the stairs this very moment. But even if she had done so, doubtless he would have found her before she could have reached safety. This old country house was in an isolated place, far from the main highway.

Linda shivered. How tired she was!

There were violets in a crystal bowl on the dressing table and she buried her face in these, wishing that she might lose herself forever in their cool fragrance.

She was startled by a soft sliding sound, as of a door opening. She looked in its direction.

One of the carved oak panels of the wall had swung outwards and from the dark opening a man was advancing toward her.

"Don't be afraid," he said quickly, "I only want to talk to you for a minute."

Linda had a blurred impression of torn, disheveled clothes and of a haggard face overshadowed by a blood-stained bandage wrapped clumsily about the head.

This strange apparition crossed the room in two strides, picked Linda up in gentle but none too steady arms, and carried her within the mysterious opening. It happened so quickly that she had hardly time to wonder at it.

"You're quite safe," the stranger whispered, putting her down. He slid the panel back into place. "Please give me a chance to talk to you."

He started to rise, but Linda held him close and he was too weak to resist

Linda was speechless, not from fright but from a sudden sense of relief. For the moment at least she was hidden from Courtney's devouring eyes.

"Will you take my hand, please, and follow me?" said the stranger. "Sorry I can't carry you. He pretty well did me in this morning."

They were in complete darkness. Linda found his hand and they proceeded along what seemed a very narrow passage, long unused. The air was heavy with a musty, shut-up odor. There was a flight of steps up which they groped their way. Great cobwebs hung here and there; Linda felt them brush against her face, her hands.

She began to be afraid. Where was this man taking her? What was he doing here? Who was he?

There was something hauntingly familiar about his voice and she remembered now that the face she had glimpsed for a moment had not seemed entirely strange. Yet she was sure that he was no one she knew or could remember ever seeing before.

Suddenly he stopped. Linda felt that they had come to the end of the

passage. He passed his hand slowly over the wall in front, pushed here, pulled there, and finally some sort of door slid back.

MOONLIGHT! Linda took a deep breath of fresh air. They were in a small space whose outer side was a tiny ornamental balcony. It was high up on the side of the house. Linda perceived that so long as they kept away from the outer edge they could hardly be seen from any outside point.

"We can talk here," said the stranger. "Please sit down and make yourself as comfortable as possible—Mrs. Courtney Graham!"

Linda, bewildered, sank down into a moonlit corner.

"I'm the real Courtney Graham, you know," the other remarked, dropping down near by.

Linda looked at him, and was more startled by what she saw than by his words. For his face, looked at closely, was very like the face of the man she had married! She realized that his voice had seemed familiar for the same reason.

"I don't understand—" she murmured.

"Look here—do you love him?"

"No, no! It was a dreadful mistake!"

"I hoped it would be that way. Believe me, if you want him, or the money, I'll step aside."

"No, no!"

"It's a nice lot of money—you could have everything—"

"Please don't talk of it."

"And it won't be easy this way. You must take risks—"

"Oh, can't you see that I'd risk anything before I'd go back to him?"

"I believe you."

"Tell me about it all, Mr—Graham."

"Call me Cort, won't you please? My friends used to. I'd like to think of you as my friend—for a little while." His voice was wistfully pleading.

Linda saw that he was slighter and younger looking than the man who called himself Courtney. His voice, too, had a quality of sincerity that had been lacking in the other. She saw also that he was ill and near exhaustion.

"You're hurt," she said gently, "let me try to help a little." She touched the bandage on his head.

"No time. And it doesn't matter. I must get you away before it's too late. I'll just tell you my story very briefly, so you will understand.

"You see, this Karl Wiegand, he's a very distant cousin really. My mother's people were German. He discovered me wandering in a dazed condition and took me to his camp. It seems that he was with a party of prospectors. He had discovered from letters and papers in my wallet who I was.

"My memory was gone. The Wiegands knew about Uncle Clint's millions and his will. And—well, Karl looked so much like me—just a freak chance, that. He saw his opportunity. I was smuggled out of the mining camp and kept on a farm of theirs.

"After his job was done, Karl came down to the farm and stayed there, studying my voice and manner. He had plenty of time, for of course he wouldn't want to appear here too soon. The shorter the time in which he had to play my part, the safer it would be.

"All this time the only thing I could remember about myself was the date of my twenty-fifth birthday. And it seemed that I must get away because

of that. Something — I didn't know what—was calling me. I didn't know where or why. Only that I must go.

"It was just two days after Karl left that I managed to escape from the farm. I had no money. I walked, begged rides. I gave my name as Karl Wiegand. By the time I reached civilization it had become clear to me that I must come here. I worked my way.

"Well, I mustn't stop to tell you all this. I seemed to remember places, and that feeling of compulsion within me guided me here. I came to this house early this morning.

"I walked around the house. My memory was coming back. I lived here as a boy, you know. It was strange suddenly to remember my name and scenes from my earlier life, and then finally why it was so necessary to be here on my birthday.

"I was very tired and very hungry. I started for the kitchen and something to eat."

Linda, who had listened in excited silence, laid her hand gently on his shoulder. "And he — Karl — found you?"

"Yes. I walked in the little side door. He was just coming out. He jumped for me instantly, and there was murder in his eyes. I hadn't the least idea why he was there or what it was all about. But I hit back, you may be sure. In fact, I knocked him down. Then one of his men rushed out, and in a minute they had me down.

"Karl began crowing over his victory. That's his way. He told me all about it. How he was going to enjoy my inheritance while I would be rotting in an unknown grave under the cellar. And he told me about you! That hurt most, to think he had tricked a girl, using my name. Oh, it made me wild!

"'I'm going to shoot you to-night,' he said, 'if you don't die in the meantime, and I hope you don't. I've a few more things to say to you, but no time now. Have to get ready for the wedding. Ha, ha! Eric, is there some safe place to throw this dog for the day?'

"The man Eric said the old wine cellar would be just the place. So they took me down there and locked me in. My head was bleeding a good bit. I managed to tear off a piece of my shirt and wrap it up. I fainted then.

"When I came to, it was late in the afternoon. Things looked pretty desperate. The wine cellar is solidly built, brick walls, heavy door, the merest scrap of light and ventilation from a window a cat could hardly crawl through."

"But you did get out!"

"I remembered Grandfather Graham's secret passage. An old gardener told me about it when I was a boy. He's dead now, and I don't suppose another living soul knows of it. It was hours, though, before I could get strength enough to try it. Believe me, I came as soon as I could. Because of you."

"Now I know," murmured Linda, "why I was so attracted to—Karl."

"Why was it?"

BUT Linda was shyly silent. In her heart was the thought that it was because of Karl's likeness to the man she could truly love.

"Let's go away quickly," she said. "How can we go?"

"You will go."

"Not alone—no!"

"You can send help for me."

"Not alone," repeated Linda. "Couldn't we climb down from this balcony?"

"Look!" Cort pointed to the trees beyond the lawn. In their shadow a man was pacing slowly back and forth.

"One of Karl's men. He has three or four with him, I think, from what he said this morning. You see, he's already discovered that I have escaped from the cellar. He will suspect a secret door, but it will take him a long time to find it. But he's clever. He would first set his men to guard the place and then hunt me down at his leisure."

Linda shuddered and seized Cort's hand. "Then how could I get away, if they are watching?"

"I'll tell you. I will let you back into your room through the secret panel. We can listen and be sure Karl is not in the room. I don't think he will be, anyway. He will be searching for me. You can go about the house as you please, and no one will stop you. If you see Karl or any one you can just say that you are looking around your new home. Wait about ten minutes, then go down and slip out through one of the French windows into the shrubbery on the other side of the house."

"But there'll be a man watching that side, too. They won't think anything of my wandering about the house, but if I try to leave the grounds—"

"There'll be no one there. I'll take care of that."

"Cort, what do you mean?"

"Girl of my dreams, don't you know it will make me more than happy to be of any service to you? Please—just go. When you reach the highway, you can soon find help, and that is the best chance for me, too."

"Perhaps I could telephone from the house."

"I've no doubt he has cut the wires by this time. He knows I'm somewhere about the place, and he'll take no chances. The only way is for you to go before they become suspicious of you."

"I know what you are thinking of," said Linda. "I won't let you sacrifice yourself. You would show yourself on the balcony here, and they would all come after you, and I would have a clear field. That's what you think."

"It would be some time before they could get me here. In the meantime you will be running for help—"

Linda shook her head. "The highway is miles away, and there's not much traffic so late at night. It might be hours before I could find any one. And you wouldn't last fifteen minutes if they knew you were here."

"But there's no use in both of us staying, dear girl. They'll hunt us like rats. Let me do one worth while thing, dream lady. I'm wounded; probably won't last long anyway. Please go."

"There might be a chance for us if we just stay here and they don't find us. Anyway, I will stay."

"Please, Linda, go before it's too late."

"No."

"Because I love you."

"I will stay—because I love you."

Cort's eyes filled with tears. "You make this the happiest moment of my life." He lifted her hand to his lips. "But you must go. Let me give you freedom. It's the only gift I can offer."

"With you or not at all."

"I can force it, you know. I'll just lean out of this balcony, now, and they'll shoot me, and then there'll be nothing left for you but to save yourself."

He started to rise. But Linda held him close in her arms and he was too weak to resist.

So they remained for a time, Cort's head resting against Linda's shoulder, her hands clasped tight in his.

"If only I could save you—" he whispered heartbrokenly.

"We'll find a way for both of us." Linda tried to make her tone confident.

"Lady of my dreams—"

The moonlit moments passed. Linda reflected that all of life and love she might ever know was in this one midnight hour. How strangely they had found each other, she and this boy! She felt strangely happy, no longer afraid.

Perhaps Karl would never find that secret passage. Perhaps she and Cort might stay hidden here for days, till their enemies tired of watching. Hopefully she suggested this to Cort.

"No chance, I'm afraid. Karl will guess a secret entrance to the wine cellar. I wouldn't be surprised if he's already tearing down the walls there."

"Oh—" gasped Linda.

"I didn't mean to frighten you," said Cort remorsefully.

"I'm not afraid—with your hand in mine."

"I'll hold it to the end."

But after a moment he exclaimed, "No, you must go! You might still be in time. If you love me—"

"If you will go with me."

Cort sat up suddenly. "Why not? If I had some of Karl's clothes—"

Excitedly they talked it over, outlined a plan.

"Let's go!" he said at last.

They crept back down the passage. Before the secret panel Cort held Linda close for a minute and they exchanged one kiss, a pledge of love, perhaps a last farewell.

Then Cort slid the panel open the tiniest fraction of an inch, listened carefully, then opened it a bit more so that he could look into the room. It was empty. He quickly swung the panel out. Linda stepped out and it closed behind her.

LINDA crossed to the mirror and hurriedly brushed the cobwebs from her hair and dress. Now she must find out whether the way was clear. She turned toward the hall door.

And nearly screamed when it was flung open and Karl rushed in. "Must keep my nerve," she said to herself, trying to force a smile.

"Oh, so here you are! Where have you been?" Karl seized her roughly by the arm.

"Oh! Is it so wrong to look at moonlight?" She managed a little laugh.

"What do you mean?"

"I was just wandering around—you were so long with that stuffy lawyer—and I found the dearest little balcony. I hope you're not cross with me."

"Oh, it's all right, of course. Only I was worried about you."

Linda's heart was thumping painfully. Would he go away to continue his search? The thought of Cort, waiting on the other side of the panel, gave her courage. Her mind began inventing a tale of hunger; she would send Karl after a sandwich for her. That would give them a minute.

But Karl spoke first. "Hope you don't mind being left alone a bit longer. One of the servants is sick—I'm doing what I can for him."

"Of course. Poor fellow. Could I help?"

"No, no." Karl turned toward the door. "I'll be up before long."

Linda followed him to the door and saw him disappear down the stairway. She followed on tiptoe. It was necessary to make sure where he was going.

As she expected, he went down the cellar stairs.

Linda flew back to her room.

She tapped softly on the panel. Cort came out at once. Linda stood guard at the door while he went into the adjoining bathroom and removed the bandage from his head and the blood stains and dirt from his face and hands. Then he helped himself to a necktie and donned Karl's hat and overcoat.

Linda caught up her own coat and they started downstairs, with difficulty restraining an impulse to run. If one of the servants should see them, he might think their procedure strange, but he would hardly presume to stop them.

They went through the library and out onto the side veranda, this being nearest the garage. A man was standing just beyond the steps.

"Oh, Eric," said Cort in a lordly manner, "do you know if there's gas in the big car?"

"Yes, sir. Plenty." Eric was regarding them with obvious surprise.

"I can't convince Mrs. Graham that the house isn't haunted. She won't stay another minute."

"Yes, sir." Eric was looking very doubtful.

Cort stepped closer to the railing and said in a confidential tone, "I don't want her here, you see. She mustn't know."

"Oh, I see, sir." Eric's tone was relieved.

But Linda heard a step within and glancing back, saw Karl pass the open library door, then turn back.

HE must not come further! She ran in, dropping her coat as she did so. The library was dark; Karl could not have seen who was outside. He may have heard voices, though.

Linda slammed the library door shut behind her and cried, "Oh, Courtney! I've been looking for you! Come upstairs! There's a man up there!"

Karl, who had been looking very black, jumped as if something had struck him. He seized Linda's arm and ran toward the stairs. "Come along!" he cried. "Where is he?"

Linda had no choice but to go.

"Where? Tell me!" Karl commanded roughly.

Linda had no time to invent a story. She must keep Karl upstairs long enough to give Cort a chance. Why not the truth?

"I was sitting before the mirror—"

"Make it snappy!" They were in the upper hall now.

"I heard a noise, like a door opening, and one of the panels in the wall opened—just a little—there was a man's face—all bloody—"

They were in the room now. Karl's grip on her arm hurt.

"Which panel?" he demanded, looking round sharply.

Linda pointed to it. He would have to break it open. That would take time.

Karl flung her into a chair. "Stay there!" He tried the panel. "How did it open?"

"From the right hand side, like a door."

Karl ran his fingers along the carving. Then he took a chair and struck the panel. But his blows made no impression on the heavy oak.

"Must have an axe," he muttered.

He strode to the door. "Eric!"

Linda felt faint and ill. Was Cort still with Eric? Would Eric guess the truth?

"Eric!" bellowed Karl.

"Yes, sir!"

"Bring an axe!"

"Yes, sir!" Eric appeared in the doorway, his eyes wide with astonishment.

"An axe, I say!" Karl added a word or two in German and Eric visibly paled.

"I thought, sir—that is, the car—"

"An axe! And quick or I'll carve you up with it!"

Eric vanished.

"I mustn't faint," thought Linda. "If I can get away while they're breaking down the panel—"

"I'm—I'm afraid, Courtney," she said aloud. "I'll go in another room—"

"You'll stay right where you are." Karl was studying her coldly. He must be wondering how much she knew.

"Oh, all right." Linda shrugged her shoulders. "Do you suppose it's a burglar?"

"Naturally. What else?"

"Why not call the police?"

"Police!" Karl muttered in German.

Linda shrank back into her chair.

Eric burst in with a very large axe.

"This panel," indicated Karl.

A few lusty blows, and the dark opening of the secret passage was revealed.

Karl drew a pistol from his pocket. "Give me your flashlight," he said to Eric. "Stay here with her. She's not to leave the room. Don't want her to see any more burglars." Karl disappeared into the passage.

Linda put her hands behind her to hide their trembling.

Eric sat down opposite her. "Why did you run like that, down in the library?" he asked.

"I heard a noise," said Linda. "Not that it's any of your business."

"Don't be too sure of that," said her guard.

Linda looked away with what she hoped was an air of haughty disdain. She could hear Karl proceeding cautiously up the passage.

Where was Cort? He would have time to take the car and get away. That would be the best thing to do. He could soon find help. Or could he? Would any one believe his strange story? He would have to go to the distant city to find friends. To-morrow perhaps. But to-night?

The sound of Karl's footsteps died away. He must be nearly at the top of the passage. It would not take him long to discover that no one was there. He would come back. He and Eric would talk, compare notes.

LINDA listened for the sound of a car, but there was none. Only an ominous stillness. Probably Cort had left while they were breaking down the panel. She hoped so. If he were safe, what matter about herself? But the thought of Karl, cruel, suspicious, vengeful, filled her heart with black horror.

Now steps sounded again in the passage. Karl! Even sooner than she had expected!

Eric sprang to his feet. Linda longed for strength to jump from her chair and run, but she could not move.

Karl rushed out, sputtering in German. He was evidently in a rage. He was terrible to look at, too, for dirty cobwebs were draped over his face and his clothes looked as if he had had a tumble in that dark and dirty passage. Not that there was much time to notice details.

"Had a fall," he muttered thickly, "lost the flashlight. Eric!"

"Yes—yes, sir."

"Guard that passage! I'm going to take her out of this!"

Linda stifled a scream as he pulled her roughly from her chair.

"Keep still!" He strode toward the door, dragging Linda with him. "And you there!" he shouted back at Eric, "if you let that fellow out—" he finished in German.

Eric drew back against the wall, as if he would like to take refuge in the passage himself.

"Let me go!" cried Linda, struggling, as she was hurried toward the stairway.

"Hush, sweetheart."

Linda looked into the eyes under the cobwebs.

"Cort!" she gasped.

"We must be quick," he whispered.

They ran down the stairs, out the little side door again, and to the garage in the rear.

A moment later the big car slid out, rolled softly past the house and shot into the driveway beyond.

"How did you do it, Cort?"

"When you ran inside I told Eric you must have forgotten something. Said I would go and see. I went in and slipped into the little coat closet in the hall."

"You should have gone with the car for help."

"I couldn't leave you alone with those wolves.

"When Eric went upstairs with the axe, I followed. I listened at the door and heard Karl start into the passage to search it. Then I ran down to the wine cellar and into the other entrance to the passage. On the way up I threw off my hat and coat and plastered myself with cobwebs."

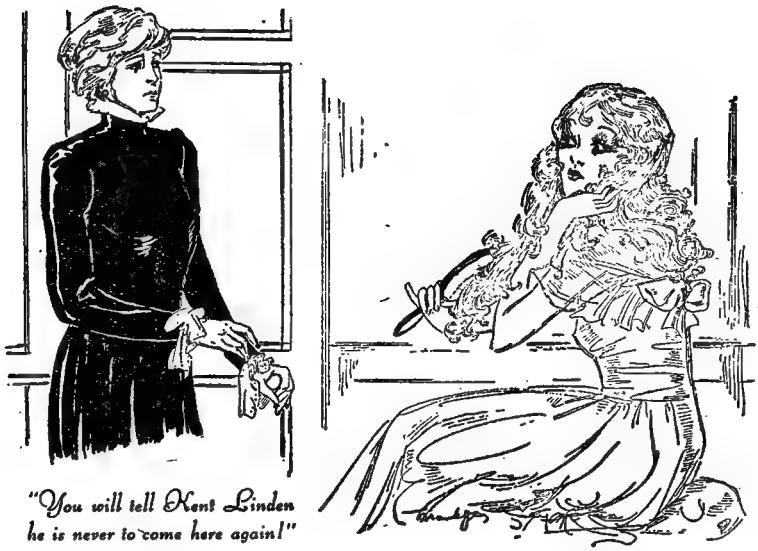
"Oh, Cort what a risk to take!"

"I hoped the disguise would pass for long enough to get you out of the room. If not, there was still a little fight left in Cort Graham. Fortunately I know Karl's favorite German swear words. That's what got Eric. It's all far behind us now, sweetheart. Let's forget it."

They were out now on the open highway. The moon shone clear ahead.

"Safe and free—together!"

"Forever, girl of my dreams."



"You will tell Kent Linden he is never to come here again!"

A Foursome in Hearts

Cupid's challenge gets an unexpected answer

By Ethel Donoher

"THAT Kent Linden is downstairs again," Miss Aspasia Glen announced, pausing at the door of her niece's room. "And I wish you would tell him not to come around here so often. In fact, I'd be better pleased if he never came at all."

Dorrit Glen paused in the act of parting her long fair hair in the middle, and regarded her aunt with troubled blue eyes.

"No one else feels the way you do about Kent," she demurred. "Everybody likes him."

"Well," said Miss Aspasia, "I'm not everybody, and I *don't* like him. The Linden men never were any good. Kent Linden's father broke his mother's heart."

"But Kent isn't like his father," Dorrit protested.

She had fastened her hair in two coils over her ears, and was slipping

into a blue linen frock. She looked fresh, sweet, pliable, and wholly unfitted to cope with the grim determination of the gaunt, gray-haired woman before her.

And Miss Aspasia felt confident enough that she would meet with no insubordination from Dorrit. She spoke, therefore, with calm authority.

"You had better tell Kent Linden this afternoon that you can get along nicely without seeing so much of him. You might find it awkward, after Kathleen comes, to dismiss him."

"I don't believe Kathleen would feel as you do about Kent," Dorrit said slowly.

"And what if she didn't?" Miss Aspasia returned, her tone faintly ironical. "If Kathleen does not approve of my attitude toward the people who come to this house, she will, while she is in my house, respect my judgment. And now you had better go down and tell Kent Linden that you don't want him to come here so often."

"But he doesn't come so often, Aunt Aspasia. He hasn't been here for two whole weeks—"

"And why hasn't he, pray tell? Because he's been away. Yet the minute he gets into town he runs over here. And I won't have it."

Dorrit made no further protest; but her aunt would have been surprised at the determination in her blue eyes as she went downstairs to greet Kent Linden.

MISS ASPASIA would have been surprised, also, if she could have seen Kent spring to his feet when Dorrit entered the living room and take her eagerly in his arms.

Kent kissed Dorrit as though he had been away for two years, instead of two weeks, and Dorrit clung to him.

"It has been so long!" he exclaimed. "Oh, darling, how I have missed you!"

"And how I have missed you!" Dorrit returned, slipping her arms about his neck. "It seemed as though you would never come home. And I have so much to tell you—so much that I didn't want to write because it is nicer to talk—"

"Your aunt knows, then, about me?" Kent asked, drawing her over to the sofa.

It was an old-fashioned sofa, upholstered in mohair. It matched perfectly the other pieces of furniture in the stiff, dark room. And it was a most uncomfortable sofa. One felt continually as though one were slipping off of it.

Kent made very sure that Dorrit did not slip off.

"Now tell me all about it," he invited when Dorrit's head was resting comfortably upon his shoulder. "What did Miss Glen say when you told her you were going to marry me?"

"But I didn't mean that I was going to tell you anything about Aunt Aspasia," Dorrit confessed. "As a matter of fact, I—I haven't said anything to her about our engagement. She'll behave horribly, Kent."

"Then we'll just walk off and get married," he decided. "She can't separate us, you know. So promise that you'll tell her, darling, then we can be married at once."

"All right. I'll try to tell her as soon as I can, dear. The reason I haven't done so before is because my sister, Kathleen, is coming here to live with us—and I didn't want her to arrive in the midst of a row."

"Your sister is coming here — the one you haven't seen since you were a child?"

"Yes—that was what I meant when I said I had so much to talk to you about that I hadn't wanted to write. Kathleen is coming, and it's tremendously exciting. I haven't seen her for ten years. And then I saw her only a few minutes at a hotel in New York. She and Aunt Florence had come on from the South, and were dashing off to California. They remained there until Aunt Florence died two months ago.

"You see, when father died, Aunt Aspasia, who was father's sister, took me, and Aunt Florence, who was mother's sister, took Kathy, so that's why we have been separated so much. If only she'll be happy here!"

"But when is your sister coming, sweetheart?"

"She's here now," a feminine voice announced unexpectedly and with gay confidence from the doorway.

Dorrit drew hastily away from Kent, sprang to her feet, and turned in the direction of the voice.

So that was Kathleen—small, dark, and vivid! Perfectly clothed and perfectly beautiful!

A moment later the two girls were in each other's arms.

"You're just as I remember you when you were ten years old and I was eight," Kathleen was exclaiming. "Pale gold hair, white skin, blue eyes—oh, you're lovely!"

Dorrit laughed happily.

"I can't compare with you for a moment, and you know it," she protested. "But why didn't you let us know when to meet you? We thought you couldn't arrive before Thursday."

"Oh, I just didn't bother," Kathleen told her. "It would have been easy enough to find my way to Morristown from New York; but as it happened, a friend met me and brought me out. And who is this?" Kathleen swung round to survey the ruddy-haired young man who was standing quietly by the sofa. Her eyes, so darkly violet that they looked black, were laughing as she added: "Being peculiarly astute, I deduct that he is either my prospective brother, or he would like to be."

"Yes to both deductions," Kent said, returning her smile.

"But you mustn't tell Aunt Aspasia, Kathy," Dorrit interposed, glancing fearfully over her shoulder. "She doesn't approve of Kent. And do be careful what you say, now, for I thought I heard footsteps."

"Is she as awful as ever?" Kathleen asked blithely. "I remember my childish impression of her the day we had luncheon together ten years ago." She turned back to Kent, and, still blithely, advised: "But don't you care. I like you. In fact, I'm going to kiss you."

And she did—at the exact moment when Miss Aspasia Glen entered.

Dorrit saw her aunt first, and gave a small gasp of horror.

Miss Aspasia had drawn herself to her full height, and was grimly regarding the sisterly salute Kent was receiving. Of course, to Miss Aspasia, it suggested nothing sisterly.

"I have heard," she remarked icily, "of promiscuous kissing, but I have never before witnessed it—and certainly I never expected to see any of it in my house."

KATHLEEN had turned at the newcomer's first words. Now, smiling disarmingly, she said: "Why, hello, Aunt Aspasia!"

Miss Glen drew back, astonished. "Is it—Kathleen?" she asked incredulously.

"Yes," that young person responded; "of course I'm Kathleen. You weren't expecting me until Thursday, I know; but I—"

"Never mind all that," she was coldly advised. "Instead, tell me at once why I find you here kissing a man who must be a complete stranger to you."

"He *was* a complete stranger when I entered the room, but he isn't now," Kathleen put her right.

Miss Aspasia's brow darkened. "Will you answer my question, please?"

"Kathy must want to go to her room," Dorrit hurriedly suggested. "Shan't I take her up, Aunt Aspasia?"

"Perhaps that would be better," Miss Glen agreed with cold precision. "But first you may explain to Mr. Linden that you will be busy for the remainder of the afternoon."

Dorrit extended her hand to Kent, but her eyes melted into his.

"Good-by," she said gently. "I must help Kathy unpack—and things like that."

"Of course," Kent agreed. "But I'll be over to-night."

"Oh, do come," Kathleen urged before Dorrit could reply. "Some one I met in California last winter, and who lives in Morristown, is coming to see me to-night. We'll have a party."

A moment later Kent had gone, and Kathleen was following her sister up the stairs. Miss Aspasia had remained stiffly aloof in the living room.

"Isn't she dreadful?" Kathleen asked, when Dorrit had ushered her into the bedroom assigned to her, and closed the door behind them. "Oh, how do you ever endure her, honey?"

"Well, she took me when I was only nine years old, you know, and, in her way, she was good to me."

"Perhaps so," Kathleen reluctantly agreed, "but that's no reason why she should walk over you and everybody else roughshod. She's a terrible woman—and I'll tell her so if she says any more—"

"Oh, darling, please don't!" Dorrit implored. "I don't want you to quarrel with Aunt Aspasia and leave here right away."

"But you won't be here yourself if you marry that Kent boy," Kathleen pointed out. "And you don't intend to keep him waiting forever, do you?"

"No—but we really shouldn't be married until Kent gets a raise. Then you could come to live with us."

Kathleen smiled at her.

"You're a darling," she decided. "But if I don't get married myself pretty soon I'm going to get a job. Why don't you do that? Then we could live together in New York until Kent gets his raise."

"But what could I do?" Dorrit asked dubiously. "I wanted to learn stenography, but Aunt Aspasia wouldn't let me—and I haven't any money—"

"Well, I have. Aunt Florence left me all she had; so I could put you through any course you wanted to take. Aunt Aspasia needn't think she can walk on either one of us. Tell me why she doesn't like your Ken. *I* think he's darling."

"So do I," Dorrit confessed with a shy smile. "But Aunt Aspasia thinks that the Linden men are ne'er-do-wells. She doesn't want me to marry into that family. Yet Kent is ambitious, and he works fearfully hard."

"Of course he does. Aunt Aspasia is just meddling in what doesn't concern her. Just as though you don't know your own heart! And just as though I don't!"

"Oh, is there some one, Kathy? Is it the man who is coming here tonight? Tell me about him."

"He's gorgeous," Kathleen dreamily explained. "The only trouble is that I'm not sure he loves me. He's

"Yes, I know. Isn't it exciting? Noel is quite charmed at the idea of having her for a stepmother. You know, of course, that she's frequently spoken of as the most beautiful woman in the world. Wouldn't it be gorgeous

"Come home at once! Do you know who this woman is?" Dorrit's song ended and Kathy stared in horror

Noel Douglas, the only son of the great Martin Douglas."

Dorrit's lips formed a round O of astonishment.

"Why, Kathy!" she exclaimed. "They're so fearfully, terribly rich! Martin Douglas has the most magnificent estate here in Morristown, and—oh, ever so many houses other places. Besides, he has just married Irene Turford, the great Metropolitan prima donna, you know."

to meet her? Don't you wish Noel would try to arrange it so that we could?"

"Yes—oh, yes—although I suppose I'd be scared to death of her. She seems to be such a — sort of superwoman. They say she is so tremendously fascinating to men."

"Well," wryly from Kathleen, "I hope she doesn't fascinate my Noel."

"She won't, since he has seen you," Dorrit assured her. "But now, there's

something I want to ask you, dear, and—somehow I've never been able to write it. Did—did Aunt Florence ever talk with you about our mother? Aunt Aspasia won't let me mention her name."

Kathleen said slowly: "Yes. She didn't go with another man, but she did leave us when you were four years old and I was only two. She was a singer when father married her, and she had a little money. After she left us she went abroad to study. But Aunt Florence would never tell me her stage name. She thought, and quite rightly, that since our mother deserted us, we were both better off without her. I don't remember her at all, do you?"

"Yes — vaguely — just as one remembers a lovely, haunting melody or the scent of a rare blossom. She used to bend over my crib and take me up in her arms and—sometimes she would cry."

Kathleen's mouth was hard; so were her violet eyes.

"Now listen to me, Dorrit Glen," she advised sternly. "Don't you start feeling sorry for the mother who abandoned us when we were babies. There wasn't any excuse for her; so don't try to make any."

"But, darling," Dorrit protested, "she was married to father, you know. Do you remember him?"

"Yes," promptly, "I do — and he was a perfect pill. It would have been all right for her to leave him if she hadn't had any children; but she had no right to walk off and leave us in the care of a man she herself couldn't endure."

"Still, father wasn't cruel to us."

"No, not exactly. He never paid any attention to us. You'd know Aunt Aspasia was his sister, wouldn't you? She acts just like him."

"I wish you didn't feel so bitter toward our mother," Dorrit said thoughtfully. "And I wonder where she is; what has become of her."

"Don't let's talk any more about it, now," Kathleen moodily interposed. "It makes me so mad whenever I even think of it. Hadn't I better get ready for dinner?"

DINNER that night was a cold, stately, and by no means hasty meal. Miss Aspasia asked Kathleen a few formal questions about her trip East, and then subsided into silence. Dorrit tried to talk naturally, but, as was usual in the presence of her aunt, she felt constrained. Kathleen made very little effort, and hoped that the ordeal would soon be over.

After dinner Miss Aspasia went up to the library on the second floor. The two girls were left, without further comment, to entertain their callers in the living room. This surprised Dorrit, and made her vaguely uncomfortable. Aunt Aspasia had told her to prevent Kent from coming to the house so often—yet she knew he was coming again to-night, and made no protest. What could that mean?

Noel Douglas arrived first. He was almost as wonderful as Kathleen thought he was. He brought a letter for her, written in a dashing, individual hand and signed Irene Douglas, inviting her and her sister to dinner the following evening and suggesting that they bring another man for Dorrit.

"We'll take Kent," Kathleen decided at once, her eyes shining. "He'll be here in a minute, Noel, and you'll like him a lot. Dorrit is going to marry him one of these days. But I'm so elated to receive a letter from the great Irene Turford—even if she does sign her new name to it!"

"She's pretty wonderful," Noel said with a smile. "Dad is simply cuckoo about her—and you can't blame him. Personally I think he was darned clever to snap Irene Turford up before she had been in this country a year."

Kent arrived just then and the next two hours passed swiftly and happily. There was only one drawback: Kathleen smoked cigarettes and Dorrit was terrified for fear her aunt would come into the room and see her. Also, Kathleen thought they should have cocktails or highballs, and seemed to consider it very strange that her Aunt Aspasia had nothing of the sort on hand.

Finally Kent asked Dorrit to sing to them. She had a charming untrained voice which was naturally well-placed. Kathleen was delighted with it and yet, at the same time, it gave her a vague feeling of antagonism. Not for worlds would she have caused her sister one pang—and yet she could not help feeling that Dorrit's beautiful voice was a direct heritage from the mother who had abandoned them in order that she might sing for others. And Kathleen wanted nothing, either for herself or her sister, which had come from that mother.

She was rather quiet, therefore, when, a little later, she went with Noel out on the shadowy veranda.

"Have you made up your mind whether or not you like the East?" he asked anxiously. "When I met you in New York and brought you out here to-day, you said you weren't sure—"

"But I'm sure now," Kathleen told him. "I do like it, Noel. And I like Morristown, too, don't you?"

"Yes, I do—now that you're here. I—I'd like any place on earth where you were. I've wasted reams of paper trying to put down what I wanted to say. But then I knew you were coming East, actually to Morristown; so I—waited. Perhaps I've waited too long. There might be—some one else. Is there, darling? Oh, don't tell me that there is! I love you so much that I—well, I wouldn't want to go on living the rest of my life, if I couldn't have you."

Kathleen said nothing, but she raised her violet eyes and looked at him. That, it seemed, was enough.

Noel's arms closed around her. He bent his head, and their lips met.

It was the first time he had ever kissed her. Kathleen felt that never before had she known tenderness, sweetness, beauty, and the triumphant assurance of having captured magic. It was a fragile, an exquisite moment, across which no rough wind should have blown. And yet one did. It came in the guise of footsteps on the veranda behind the two lovers, followed by a voice iced with anger:

"How dare you behave like this in my house, Kathleen? This is the second man to-day that I have caught you kissing!"

KATHLEEN tore herself from Noel's arms, and faced her Aunt Aspasia, a small whirlwind of indignation.

"And how dare you come out here and spy upon me?" she wanted to know.

"I should judge," said Miss Aspasia grimly, "that you need some one to spy on you. And now, march into the house and go straight to your room. This young man is going home. And"—she turned to Kent who, with Dorrit, had just come out on the veranda to see what was happening—"so are you. I told Dorrit to-day to tell you we could dispense with your society in this house; but she did not see fit to

obey me. I shall, therefore, take matters into my own hands. I do not want you to come here, Kent Linden. Perhaps that is plain enough for you. Neither"—she now addressed Noel—"do I want to find you here again. I can not permit Kathleen to entertain a man who falls so easily into her habit of promiscuous love-making. And now go home, both of you."

Kathleen, her face pale in the moonlight that slanted across it, was looking at Noel. What would he think? Her aunt had said that he was the second man to-day, whom she, Kathleen, had been caught kissing. And she couldn't explain.

Dorrit, however, although inwardly terrified of the storm she was bringing down upon her head, took matters into her own hands.

"What Aunt Aspasia means," she explained to Noel, "is that she came into the living room to-day when Kathy was kissing Kent. But, you see, she kissed Kent only because she had just learned that I was going to marry him. It was a—a sisterly kiss."

"I quite understand," Noel said gently. "And it is—perfectly all right."

"Perfectly all right, is it?" Miss Aspasia repeated ominously. "I am afraid, young man, that you will learn how entirely wrong you are. So"—her steel-like eyes flashed upon Dorrit—"you have actually agreed to marry Kent Linden—and after all I have had to say about him! Well, the marriage shall never take place. Make no mistake about that."

"It shall take place, Aunt Aspasia. You can't stop it," Dorrit said breathlessly. "But, oh, please let's not talk any more about it now. This is—too awful!"

"I quite agree with you," said Miss Aspasia. "It is worse than awful to think that a niece of mine could deceive me in this underhanded fashion."

"I think Kent and I had better go," Noel whispered to Kathleen. "We'll only make things worse and more difficult for Dorrit, if we hang around now. But remember you're all coming over to our house to dinner to-morrow night."

"Do you—still want us?" Kathleen faltered.

"*Do* I! Rather! I—"

"Kathleen," Miss Aspasia ordered, "stop whispering to that man. I won't have it. Go into the house both you and Dorrit."

Kent took Dorrit's cold little hand in his.

"Good night, darling," he said tenderly. "And don't let this worry you. Nothing can separate us, you know."

"We'll see about that," Miss Aspasia angrily predicted, as the two men went down the veranda steps. "We shall *see!*"

Kathleen turned furiously upon her aunt.

"You're a terrible woman! Oh, how could you make a scene like that before Noel? What must he think of us? Do you know who he *is?* He is the son of Martin Douglas—and—"

"*What!*" Miss Aspasia stiffened. Her voice, when she spoke again, was hoarse with emotion. "Martin Douglas! Is that boy the son of Martin Douglas?"

"Yes, he is," Kathleen reiterated. "And now you realize that he's not accustomed to being ordered out of people's houses. Noel's father is one of the biggest men in the country and he has just married Irene Turford, the famous—"

"Stop!" Miss Aspasia ordered, and she appeared to be fighting for breath.

"Don't dare to mention that woman's name in my house!"

"And why shouldn't I pray? She is one of the greatest women in the world at present. Any one would be proud to be connected with her. Certainly Noel is glad that his father married her."

"Don't mention her name in my house," Miss Aspasia repeated hoarsely. "And you can have no further connection with Noel Douglas—"

"Can't I, indeed!" Kathleen stormed. "Why—I'm going there for dinner to-morrow night, and all I need is a chance to marry Noel. I adore him. And he would probably have proposed to me, if you hadn't come out on the veranda just when you did—"

"Thank heaven, then, that I did come out!" Miss Aspasia breathed. "I forbid you—strictly forbid you," she continued, "to go to the Douglas house to-morrow or at any other time. I must go to New York on business in the morning; so I shall not be here—but I warn you not to disobey me. If you do, you will be sorry. And now I want you and Dorrit to go to your rooms."

Gladly enough the two girls escaped to Dorrit's room.

"We shall have to leave, now," Kathleen told her sister, as they faced each other in Dorrit's window seat. "Oh, wasn't it terrible? We couldn't possibly stay here with that woman—and yet, I don't want to go away until after to-morrow night, because I hope that then Noel will ask me to marry him. And if he doesn't—well, I'll just die. I—I love him so much!"

"But he will ask you, darling," Dorrit assured her. "I know he will. It's easy enough to see that he's mad about you."

"I don't know what he would have thought if you had not explained why I kissed Kent. That was wonderful of you, dear."

"Well, I couldn't let Noel leave with the idea that you went around kissing just any man for no reason at all," Dorrit pointed out. "But what shall we do, Kathy, when we do go away?"

"We'll go to New York the day after to-morrow. I have money enough for us both; so we certainly won't stay here. But, tell me something: why in the world did Aunt Aspasia look as though she were going to have a fit when I mentioned Irene Turford's name? And why did she say we shouldn't speak of her in this house? I thought she would be impressed by Noel's connection with her."

"Oh, no, not Aunt Aspasia! She hates actresses and opera singers. She thinks that any connection with the stage is a disgrace."

"How perfectly idiotic!" said Kathleen. "But don't let's worry any more about it. Aunt Aspasia can't govern our lives—as she will learn after we've gone away."

SINCE Miss Aspasia was in New York the following day, it was not difficult for Kathleen and Dorrit to keep their dinner engagement. They arrived, therefore, at the vast and impressive Douglas house in good time, and were ushered into the drawing-room, where a tall, slim woman awaited them.

Irene Turford! Both girls recognized her at once from numerous photographs they had seen.

But, each girl instantly concluded, no photograph could ever do her justice!

She was wearing a low-cut frock—and such a frock!—of silver net. Her arms and throat were like deep-toned,

chiseled ivory. Her hair was black, parted in the middle, and coiled low on her neck; her nose was small and straight; her mouth was wide, provocative, hauntingly lovely, and her eyes were so darkly violet that they looked black. She might have been thirty or forty years old. No one could have guessed and no one would have cared. Royally she deserved the title that had been granted her: the most beautiful woman in the world!

As she advanced toward Dorrit and Kathleen, they wondered if they imagined that she grew suddenly pale, and that her smile became fixed.

"I am so glad you could come," she said in a rich, throaty voice that reminded one vaguely of liquid music. "Which is Dorrit and—which Kathleen? I think I know—but you tell me."

Dorrit, overcome by shyness, was unable to utter a word; so it was Kathleen who explained.

"I thought so," Irene told them, giving a hand to each girl, and regarding them searchingly in turn. "I thought I knew—from Noel's description, of course."

And then Noel and his father entered the room.

Martin Douglas, tall and strikingly handsome with his dark hair brushed with white at the temples, welcomed his son's guests cordially, and he was equally cordial to Kent, who arrived a few minutes later.

Then cocktails were served. Dorrit choked over hers, and felt, to her intense mortification, that Irene Turford was closely watching her.

Singularly enough, Kathleen was under the impression that Irene Turford's eyes were fixed upon her. And, for the first time in her life, Kathleen felt nervous.

How could she hope to impress her? Somehow she must manage to make both Irene Turford and Noel's father feel that she would be a suitable wife for their son.

This thought haunted Kathleen all through dinner. She wished, many times, that Noel were just a poor man's son, who would not require so much perfection in his wife. For, oh, it was Noel she loved, not his money or position!

Dorrit, on the other hand, was radiantly happy. The long table, with its sparkling crystal, gleaming silver, and twinkling candlelight, fascinated her. The spacious room which, like the rest of the house, suggested the dignity and the flawless taste of its owner, delighted her. And the beautiful woman at the head of the table was the great and famous Irene Turford—with whom she, little Dorrit Glen, was having dinner!

And yet the real cause for her elation was Kent, who was seated beside her—for Kent had just told her he was to have a raise the first of the month, and that there was no reason now why they shouldn't be married at once.

BUT when they finished dinner and returned to the drawing-room, Dorrit's joy was severely dashed. For Noel asked her to sing. In fact, he insisted that she should sing. And Dorrit felt that she would rather die than sing before Irene Turford.

"You haven't any reason at all for hesitating," Noel urged her. "You have an unusually lovely voice. We would all enjoy it."

Irene herself led Dorrit to the piano — and Dorrit felt as though she were being led to the stake.

"Please sing for us," Irene was saying persuasively. "I knew, as soon as

I heard you speak, that you could sing. And please believe me when I say I am very eager to hear you."

And so Dorrit sang. She was nervous, and yet her voice, always lovely, seemed to tear at the hearts of her listeners.

Particularly did it tear at the heart of Irene Turford Douglas, as she sat in a high-backed chair, a little apart from the others.

Baby's boat's the silver moon,
Sailing in the sky,
Sailing o'er the sea of sleep,
While the clouds float by.

Sail, baby, sail,
Out upon that sea—
Only don't forget to sail
Back again to me.

There was not a vestige of color in Irene's face. She was living over again all the years during which she had wondered whether the babies who sail out upon life's voyage ever do sail back to their mothers — particularly if the mothers have embarked upon a voyage of their own, leaving their babies behind them.

Dorrit's song was ended. There was, however, no opportunity for applause or for requests for more. Even before that last note on the piano had died away an infuriated voice in the hall had caught the instant attention of every one in the drawing-room.

"I tell you," that belligerent voice was saying, "I will go in. You can't keep me out."

Dorrit and Kathleen had only time to exchange frantic glances before Miss Aspasia Glen had stalked into the room.

"Well," she began, addressing her nieces, "I thought I should find you here! I *thought* I should! And do you know where you are? I should like to ask you *that*."

Dorrit, white and trembling, arose from the piano bench.

"Oh, Aunt Aspasia," she began, "please—"

"We'll go home," Kathleen decided, rising, her eyes dark with humiliation. Both Noel's father and his stepmother would do everything in their power, now, to prevent him from marrying the niece of Aspasia Glen. And even Noel himself would be disgusted.

"Indeed you won't go until I have said what I have come to say; then you'll go quickly enough," Miss Aspasia informed her. She added, pointing a quivering finger at Irene, "Do you know who that woman is?"

Irene arose. Her face was colorless. The eyes which she turned from Kathleen to Dorrit looked haunted.

"She is going to tell you," she said in a half whisper, "that I am—your mother."

DORRIT stared at her, swayed a little, and then sat limply down on the piano bench. Her mother! Irene Turford, her *mother!*

Kathleen, her eyes wide, startled, looked as though she had been turned to stone.

And yet it was Kathleen who spoke first.

"Is it—true?" she asked gropingly. "Are you—really our—mother?"

Irene answered her through colorless lips, "Yes, it is quite true." She turned to the others. "Will you go out please, and take Aspasia with you? I should — like to speak with — my daughters."

Then it seemed that Kathleen came back to life.

"We haven't anything to say to you!" she flamed. "And I never want to see you again as long as I live."

But Martin Douglas was already

marshalling the others out into the hall—and even Miss Aspasia was obeying him.

Kathleen and Dorrit were alone with their mother.

She stood motionless before them.

"It is all true," she said at last. "I am your mother and I ran away from you when you were babies—because I could not endure living with your father. Of course I was only twenty-two and I—I did not know until afterwards how much I loved you. But that was no excuse for me. There *is* no excuse for me—"

"Oh," Dorrit broke in softly, "but if you were sorry—"

Irene turned, then, and looked at her elder daughter—and, a minute later, Dorrit was close in her mother's arms.

Kathleen, feeling a wild inclination to cry but keeping a stiff upper lip and a scowling brow, stood alone in the center of the room, feeling suddenly forlorn and forsaken. Yet she had, nevertheless, no intention of yielding to the charm of this fascinating but wholly unscrupulous new mother.

"If you were sorry you left us, why didn't you come back?" she inquired pugilistically.

"Because," Irene told her, still holding Dorrit close in her arms, "your father would not have taken me back. He was exactly like Aspasia. Later, after he died, my sister Florence wrote me that you were both well cared for. I had very little money in those days—so little that I felt I had no right to take you away from good homes to share my hardships. Then, after I had prospered, I—I felt certain you would not want to see me, no matter how much I wanted you."

"Well," said Kathy stubbornly, fighting back her tears, "Dorrit can do as she likes, but I shan't have anything to do with you."

"Very well, then," said Irene, "you may go back home with your Aunt Aspasia. I'll keep Dorrit here with me."

Kathleen's lips parted in astonishment.

"I shan't!" she almost shouted. "I shan't go home alone with Aunt Aspasia. I—I hate her!"

"More than you hate me?" Irene asked quietly.

Kathleen did not reply, but her lips quivered and two large tears rolled down her cheeks.

Irene held out her arms—and Kathy dashed into them, crying, now, as though her heart would break.

"Oh, my baby!" Irene exclaimed brokenly. "You were so little when I went away. So little and helpless! How could I have left you—you and my Dorrit?" She held out her hand, blinded now by tears. Dorrit clasped it, and was drawn into the circle.

SO Noel and Kent found them a few minutes later.

"Miss Glen has gone home," the former began, obviously embarrassed by the deluge of feminine tears into which he appeared to have floundered. "Dad wanted me to ask you if the girls weren't going to stay here now."

"You see," Irene explained to her daughters, "my husband knows all about you. I told him before we were married. And Noel told me this morning, Dorrit, that you wanted to marry Mr. Linden—whom I shall now call Kent—and that your Aunt Aspasia objected. Well, I do not object. You shall marry the man of your choice, dear."

"That's—awfully nice of you,"

Kent told her, plainly as embarrassed as Noel was by the scene they had interrupted. "I—I'll try all my life to make Dorrit happy."

"I am sure you will." Irene smiled at him, and then turned to Noel, adding: "Yes, the girls are staying here—until Dorrit marries Kent and Kathleen marries you."

"But—but Noel never *asked* me to marry him," Kathleen faltered, her cheeks flaming.

A low ripple of laughter broke from Irene.

"Gracious Heaven!" she exclaimed. "Then suppose we get out of here, Dorrit and Kent, so that Noel can have a good chance to ask her?"

"No!" Kathleen cried, springing indignantly to her feet.

But, just the same, the others laughingly departed—and she was alone with Noel.

"Sweetheart," he said reproachfully, "don't you want me to ask you to marry me?"

"I don't want you to be forced to do it," he was informed.

Noel regarded her steadily for a moment; then he took her close in his arms, and pressed tender lips to hers.

"What a mutinous little thing it is!" he said whimsically. Then, with earnest insistence, "But don't you know that I love and adore you? Didn't I tell you so last night?"

"Yes—but—but you didn't ask me to marry you."

"How could I? I didn't have a chance. But I want you to marry me, darling, more than I know how to say. So—will you, sweetheart?"

"Oh, yes," said Kathy, drawing a long, happy breath. "I've loved you so much, ever since last winter, and I was so afraid you would never ask me to marry you."

Noel crushed her to him.

"Darling heart!" he said huskily, and then began to cover her face with kisses, lingering when he reached her sweet, provocative mouth.

And this time no cold or antagonistic wind, in the form of a despotic aunt, stilled their ecstasy.

"Isn't it too amazing," Kathleen said a little later, "the way things have turned out? Here I have been worrying, ever since I came into this house, because I felt that I simply *must* impress Irene Turford enough to prevent her from criticising me to you or your father after I had left—and yet Irene Turford is my own mother. I was trying to go over big with my own mother. Just think of that!"

"Well," Noel held her very close, "you did go over big with her, both you and Dorrit. She's crazy about you. Anybody can see that. And, after all, isn't it rather wonderful to be Irene Turford's daughter?"

"Yes," Kathleen admitted happily. "But, oh, darling, it will be even more wonderful to be your wife!"

Noel said nothing to this. It was one of those times when actions can speak more plainly than words—and, if kisses are actions, Noel spoke not only plainly but eloquently.

And upstairs the most beautiful woman in the world was standing by an open window, looking out through unshed tears over the moon-drenched garden. Close beside her with his arms about her, stood the husband she adored.

"I've found them!" she exulted. "I have my babies again, Martin. I don't deserve them—not for a minute—but—"

"My beautiful," Martin interposed softly, drawing her closer, "you deserve the sun for a hearth fire and the

stars for a diadem. Don't you know that?"

It is to be supposed that the business associates of Martin Douglas would have been surprised if they had overheard him just then—and yet, if they had known Irene Turford, perhaps they would not have been so very much surprised, after all.

At any rate, Irene assured him that she deserved neither the sun nor the stars.

"And least of all, dear," she concluded, "do I deserve my daughters and—you."

But Martin silenced her then with his lips on hers.

MEANWHILE, in the great library, Dorrit and Kent were occupying one big chair out of all the many others the room had to offer.

"Isn't it strange," she asked dreamily, "to think that the famous Irene Turford is my mother? Isn't she marvelous, Kent?"

"Rather!" he agreed warmly. "And she is going to give you to me—very soon, I hope."

"Yes, very soon. She won't keep us waiting. Oh, darling, I'm so happy! You and I can be married, Kathy will marry Noel, and we have found a mother who is the most beautiful, most famous woman in the world and who loves us. Everything is perfect."

Kent kissed the lids down over her bright blue eyes; then his lips swept across her cheek until they found her mouth.

"I'll bet," he told her a little later, "that your mother is no end proud of your voice."

Dorrit opened wide her eyes.

"My mother proud of *my* voice!" she exclaimed. "Why, darling, do you imagine that she calls the noise I make *singing?*"

"Of course I do," Kent stoutly declared. "And I'm sure that, if the truth were known, you sing much better than she does."

"Oh!" said Dorrit weakly. Then, "You go on thinking that, darling, but never tell mother about it, will you?"

"Of course I shan't—although I'll bet she knows it as well as I do."

"No," said Dorrit emphatically. "She loves me—but not that much."

"She couldn't love you as much as I do," Kent whispered against her lips. "Nobody could."

Dorrit tightened her arm about his neck and returned his kisses with dream-swept ardor. Then:

"Can't you imagine how furious Aunt Aspasia is?" she mused. "She came here to-night, prepared to point out to us the mother who had deserted us—and she was firmly convinced that we would turn away from that mother in high indignation. Then Aunt Aspasia thought we would come back to her, and that she could prevent us from marrying you and Noel. She just hates mother, doesn't she?"

"As nearly as I can make out," Kent deducted, "she just hates everybody. And that's why she has lost out all around, darling."

"Yes," Dorrit agreed, pressing her cheek to his, "it's love that wins the game, isn't it? Mother won us over because, whatever she did, she really does love us—and we won each other because—"

"Because," he finished soberly and with infinite tenderness, "we have given to each other all the love that mortals have to give."

"And to keep?"

"And to keep, darling heart, so long as we both shall live."

"I can explain! It was only a joke"

Lady Golden Heart

When he proclaimed his hatred of women in general and blondes in particular, Pat's adored boss started something!

By Agnes Best

"WHEW!" said Patricia, running a hand through her bright golden hair and sinking wearily down on one of the boxes that adorned the general storeroom behind the Buchtel Beauty Shop. "It's hot! Especially for September. Am I glad my vacation starts next week?"

"Did you deliver the cold cream?" asked Donna Blake, in the superior tone she affected toward all the girls

who worked under her. "Where's the receipt?"

Pat's golden-brown eyes widened. "But you told me they were old customers, and not to press them for a receipt! He did say he'd mail one, along with the check."

"Well—your water-wave customer is waiting. Take some waving fluid in with you."

"But I just stocked my booth last night. I don't need any more."

"I looked in your booth this morning," said Donna coldly, "and there wasn't any. You must be more careful, or the boss will kick."

Patricia frowned. "That's funny. I was sure I got a fresh supply last night for my booth. Is the dear boss here yet?"

"Why so affectionate?" asked Donna, flashing her a look. "I thought you didn't like him."

"I don't!" flamed Pat. "Of all the conceited, bullheaded, I-love-me bachelors, he's the one!"

"The trouble with Lee Buchtel," said Donna, carelessly, "is just that he's too good-looking, too rich, only twenty-eight — and a woman hater. The girls can't forgive all that. But he wouldn't be owner of the Buchtel Beauty Shops and sole manufacturer of the Lady Golden Heart Beauty Aids if he paid attention to girls instead of business. He's already worth a cool million."

"I don't care if he's worth twenty millions!" declaimed Pat fiercely. "Any man with the crazy notions he's got about girls—"

"Oh, they're not so crazy, really. He's been selling beauty — artificial beauty—all his life. He's tired of it. You can't blame him for deciding to marry a simple girl with simple tastes—"

"He wants," mimicked Pat, sweetly, "a nice, dear little girl who never uses powder, never uses rouge, and holds up her hands in horror at sight of a lipstick, especially Golden Heart Glow, Made for Blondes. Bless her precious heart. She must adore him, and let him walk all over her," she finished inelegantly, her lips curling.

"That's about it," admitted Donna. "He particularly hates blondes—Golden Heart blondes. That lets you and me out."

"My heart is broken," declared Pat crisply, but there was a swift, dull color in her cheeks.

"Wouldn't it be fun to take him down a peg?" murmured Donna, evidently forgetting that Pat was only one of the girls who worked under her. "Wouldn't it be fun to dress up like the kind of a girl he thinks he likes—just to show him how silly he is?"

"Would it!" sighed Pat, fervently.

"Look at this old wig we've got here—was there ever a more dreadful color? That's the kind he thinks he wants."

"Let me try it on," said Pat.

"It changes your whole appearance. Funny what a difference hair can make."

Patricia stared at herself in the glass. If she'd never appreciated her golden hair before, she certainly did now!

"My word! If I had on an old dress, and darkened my skin a bit, you would never know me, would you?"

"You sure wouldn't." A swift light gleamed in Donna's eyes; her hand was shaking. "There's an old black dress and some flat-heeled shoes over there on that trunk. I don't know where they came from. Why don't you take them—"

"Oh, well, there isn't time, now. I'm

going on my vacation, and so, I hear, is the dear boss."

"He's going to Sharon Lake. He hopes there won't be a woman in the whole place, especially a blonde."

"Oh, he does?" Pat's eyes blazed. "Just to hear what that man says makes me boil! I've got a notion to go there myself! I hadn't really decided on any special place yet—"

"And dress up in these clothes!" Donna's voice trembled. "Make him fall for you, dressed up like this—"

Pat stared. Suddenly a twinkle of merriment appeared in her eyes. "Donna! Could I?"

"Why not? You could have the clothes in your room, stay at his hotel, and just for a while in the evening dress up and sit on the porch, waiting for him—you know, just like the old-fashioned girl he thinks he wants. Say, I wish it was *my* vacation! I'd show him!"

Pat laughed delightedly. "I'm going to! I'll call myself Miss Davis! I'll vamp him for fair! Thinks blondes are dangerous, does he! Well, I'll teach him a quiet, old-fashioned girl is more dangerous than you and me, if we do use rouge and eye-shadow—"

"It sounds great!" sighed Donna, her brilliant eyes half hidden by lowered lids. "But all this time, young lady, your water-wave customer is waiting. Better rush, and don't forget there's a special on Lady Golden Heart Hair Tint. By the way, I'll leave fifty dollars on the cash register—your advance salary for your vacation—"

"What? I didn't know they did that—"

"Oh, Lee Buchtel is a nice boss in lots of ways. Just take the cash; we won't bother the bookkeeper for a check, as this isn't regular pay day. Now hurry and get to work—"

Patricia put the grayish-brown wig aside and touched up her own hair before going into the shop. Yes, she was altogether too decided a blonde for Lee Buchtel to regard with anything but distrust.

"He's sold so much peroxide he doesn't believe there's such a thing as an honest blonde," sighed Patricia, filling her pocket with advertising blotters: tiny scented blotters, heart-shaped, and adorned with a beautiful lady whose wondrous hair shone like the sun. "Be His Lady Golden Heart!" suggested the Buchtel Beauty Aids. "You can!"

As she entered the shop she saw a man leaving her booth. Sam Parker—what business had he in her booth? That was the third time it had happened. Even if he was sales manager, Pat didn't think he had the right to go into her private working booth when and how he pleased. She'd speak to Donna about it . . . but no, that would be no use. Donna always sided with the man in the case.

"What lovely hair you have!" exclaimed Pat's water-wave customer, gazing with longing eyes at the lustrous mass of sunlight that crowned Patricia's small proud head.

"Yes," said Patricia gently, as though she were repressing a tremendous force. Just at that moment she had heard Lee Buchtel passing her booth. He must have heard the remark. Well, what difference did it make? What did she care what Lee Buchtel thought? She hated him.

Of course it was because she hated him so that her heart did such funny tricks when he merely asked her a simple question about the waving fluid. If he but passed her curtained booth, her heart would skip every other beat, and

the color dart into her cheeks and away again, until she was positively weak. It was awful that any man could make her feel like that. Especially one she hated so.

As for him, he looked at her exactly as he did at the permanent waving machine. And, Pat knew, always would. He had to have her type in his beauty shops—perfect blondes who were living advertisements for his Lady Golden Heart Blonde Beauty Aids. But further than that, he had no use for them. He knew too well how ephemeral, how artificial, beauty was. All his life he'd been dealing with painted beauty; his father was a pioneer in the field. He'd dealt with women who had but one Mecca: beauty of face and figure. He'd seen them go wild over a flawless skin and slender body, while child and husband went neglected.

At least that's what he said. Or, to be more exact, that's the reputation he held. No one had exactly heard him say the words. Just the same, he acted as though that was what he believed.

Patricia was very gay the remaining two days before she went to Sharon Lake. Her head was buzzing with ideas about "Miss Davis," and what she was going to do to one Lee Buchtel. And, after that — oh, well, she should worry about after that.

But for all her optimism, Patricia felt a sickly sinking of her heart that first night in Sharon Lake, when, without turning her head from the menu before her, she knew it was Lee Buchtel himself who had entered the little rustic dining hall. Lee Buchtel, more handsome, more wonderful than ever in his tweeds. Tall, lithe, sun-tanned, full of clean young life and happiness! How could he be so, brooded Patricia resentfully, with all the crazy notions he had? He looked as excited as a child at a picnic. A new, joyous world was before him: a world without cold creams, permanent waves, and wrinkled skins that cried for youth and smoothness.

Patricia lifted her eyes as she felt his dark, compelling gaze upon her. Did he recognize her? It was a cold, breathless moment.

But no. He turned quietly away and seated himself at his table.

IT was not surprising that he did not recognize her. With the dull brown wig, darkly tinted skin and shapeless black dress, she looked very little like the slim golden blond Patricia. And yet—she wasn't as ugly as she thought. For there were still her eyes and lips, unchanged. She could never be really unattractive as long as she had such deep, luminous eyes; such a luscious, sweet mouth, with its short, impudent upper lip. And there was something else about her, the intangible, unexplainable and unnameable something that was simply Patricia. No wig, no ill-fitting clothes could hide Patricia herself.

Nevertheless, it took three days of patient work, subtle work, before he spoke to her. Three precious days of directing all the power of her personality, silently and unobtrusively, upon him. Of course she had hints of final success: she caught more than once his thoughtful, rather wondering eyes regarding her. She felt more than once the wave of awakening interest strike her. The old Patricia would have found quick and effective ways to get him to speak to her. But Miss Davis was working in a more deadly way.

The third evening, as she sat on the hotel veranda, she got restless. The dance orchestra was playing in the

ballroom, and her feet ached to dance. She watched the bright roadsters rolling by, filled with gay, laughing young people; she caught glimpses of couples strolling by the lake in the moonlight. As soon as she became Patricia, she knew there were any number of boys waiting to take her out, too; but as Miss Davis—well, Patricia's boy-friends never even saw the quiet, mouse-like person sitting so patiently on the veranda.

Then she caught her breath with a tiny little gasp. Lee Buchtel, smiling, was standing before her.

"Perhaps it isn't a proper introduction—simply staying at the same hotel—but being that it is such a tiny hotel, and I'm so very lonesome—"

"Lonesome?" Pat managed to echo faintly.

"I came to Sharon Lake to be lonesome," went on Lee, his fine lips curling whimsically. "It's all right in the daytime, with a fishing-rod, but in the evening I—I'd enjoy a canoe ride, with a girl like you."

Patricia felt a curious thrill quiver through her from head to foot. She felt the color darting into her cheeks and away again. She lowered her lashes swiftly, for she felt that her eyes revealed the joy that had rushed into her heart at the mere sound of his voice.

"I—I'm sure I—I'd enjoy it, too," she murmured.

There was something in the touch of his arm as they walked down the steps to the lake that disturbed her. A girl can tell when a touch is simply politeness, or when—

But how ridiculous! Pat tossed her head in self-scorn.

As the canoe floated over the black and silver water, she felt glamour stealing over her. She felt as neither Patricia nor Miss Davis had ever felt: she was in another world, and this new world was shared only by the man in the other end of the canoe. Lee, wielding the paddle slowly, carelessly, without a splash, his profile clear and clean in the moonlight, his dark eyes shining—

And he was looking at her. He seemed unable to take his eyes from her.

Rather desperately, Patricia tried to make conversation. And soon even the conversation was under the spell of the moonlight; Pat found herself saying sweet, wistful things: things that she had often thought before, but never dared to say, lest people think her queer. But Lee, she knew, didn't think her queer. It was all a part of the new world. A quiet world, full of deep and immeasurably beautiful things.

At eleven o'clock Patricia had an appointment with one of the boys she had met since coming to Sharon Lake. She would much rather have stayed out on the water with Lee, but it was best to be very careful. So she told him she had better be going in now.

On the veranda she held out her hand. It was a small, white, exquisite hand, made for a man to hold in his. "I've had a lovely evening," she told him earnestly.

He caught her hand. "I wonder," he said, "if you've any idea how wonderful it's been—for me. I'll see you to-morrow?"

"Surely," she murmured, as she drew her hand away and hurried into the hotel.

ALL the while Patricia was changing into her own clothes, and while she brushed out her shining, living mass of hair, she frowned,

bit her lips, and her heart beat that absurd way—skipping, jumping, and rushing. What on earth was the matter with her? No use to get so excited because her funny little scheme was working.

Dazzling and gay in a flowery, lacy frock of palest shell pink and tiny satin slippers to match, she went to the ballroom. She wasn't in the mood for dancing, but she'd make herself be. It was best for Patricia Milton to be very much in evidence as soon after Miss Davis's exit as possible. And, of course, Lee wouldn't be in the ballroom. She didn't need to worry about seeing him again—

But he was. She was dancing with more than usual vivacity, looking up into her partner's face with saucy, teasing eyes and provocative lips, when suddenly, turning away for a moment, she saw him. He was standing near the door, alone, and looking at her.

Patricia went cold. Then she realized he was smiling at her in quite the same impersonal way he did in the shop. Quickly she summoned an answering smile to her own lips, and was careful not to look his way again.

Very early the next morning Miss Davis was out, taking a walk. Patricia had a feeling that was what Miss Davis would do. In the same black dress and wide, flat-heeled oxfords, she walked briskly away from town.

"Miss Davis!" Lee Buchtel, in fishing togs, caught up with her. "You're an early bird!"

"Good morning," said Miss Davis, smiling without showing her teeth. "I like the early mornings."

"Do you like fishing? Would you enjoy fishing this morning?"

"I would like to watch you," replied Miss Davis, with becoming shyness. "I would enjoy that."

"Good. My car is around the corner."

They rode in silence beside the lake to the stream where fishing was best. Patricia stole a glance every once in a while at his profile, just to assure herself that it meant nothing to her. And then he turned and caught her glance. The blood throbbed into her cheeks, beat into her temples. She made a hasty, mumbled remark about the view across the water, and silence fell again.

An hour passed. Patricia liked sitting here beside him, watching the strong, graceful throw of his line; the quick, exact lighting on the water of his trout fly. She liked to look up at him as he stared intently at the water; liked to watch his clear, strong profile etched against the bright blue of the morning sky. The way his black hair went back from that curve in his forehead—oh, what right had he to object to a girl's hair because it was beautiful, when his own was like that?

It was an hour just like the one on the lake last night. There was no need of words. Patricia looked at the silvery water and thought, with a glow of happiness, how beautiful it was. She looked at the aspens on the other side, frail and white and cool, shivering in the mountain breeze, and wondered that she had never before seen any so beautiful. Everything was beautiful! And joyful—and deeply, endlessly satisfying.

She was glad she was Miss Davis. For Patricia would never have dreamed of spending a morning like this, and so would have missed a new and lovely gladness.

"Do you," he asked, "stay at Sharon Lake all summer?"

"No," answered Miss Davis briefly, and stared steadily at the water. She

wondered, miserably, why she felt so rotten all of a sudden. Of course she was deceiving him, but he had it coming, didn't he? Any man with such crazy notions deserved to be punished.

Besides, this was only an episode in both her life and his. It would soon be over—

But that didn't make her feel any better! For she knew all of a sudden that she would like to play Miss Davis all her life, if she could be with him.

It was time to go. Patricia, standing on the bank of the stream, her feet almost touching the water's edge, felt as if she were saying good-by to something very precious. She turned her eyes to him.

And then, so quickly she never knew just how it had happened, she was in his arms: his lips, for one long, mad moment, were pressed on hers.

Then, "Forgive me," he said quietly. "I should not have done that—now—but I—you—you see, I love you."

Swiftly her lashes fell, in happiness that flooded her like great waves.

"Not even knowing," he added gently, "your first name, I love you."

She opened her eyes, wide, filled with sudden terror. Her name! To him she was Miss Davis. He loved Miss Davis. Not herself, but Miss Davis. A being that did not exist. A being that was only a mockery, a joke—a cheap, mean joke.

"I'll hold you, just like this, until you tell me!"

"What's the matter? I don't want to frighten you—"

"No." She looked at him steadily, her eyes deep and dark, the heavy black lashes curling away from them. "No. But you mustn't say that. You mustn't

love me!" she added wildly. "Let's—let's go now—"

He made no answer. But his hold on her arm, as they walked to the car, was firm and strong, and somehow it said to Patricia that he loved her now, would love her always. It paid no attention to her command not to love her. It was deep and powerful like a tide that could not be opposed.

And all the way to the hotel they were silent. In the lobby she twined her fingers and looked away, as she said, "I'm leaving in the morning. I guess—I won't see you again."

"But there's to-night. If there's only to-night left, surely you'll go on the lake once more—"

"No!" She took a deep breath when it was spoken.

"Let's watch the sunset together. I want to see it once, with you. I'll be waiting for you by the lake at seven o'clock. Will you?"

Before she could answer the hotel clerk interrupted. "A call for you, Mr. Buchtel. Important, he says."

As Lee turned to reply, Miss Davis slipped away to her room.

SLOWLY Patricia took off the drab wig, the dowdy black dress. Miss Davis! Miss Davis was vanishing, never to reappear. She lingered on each unfashionable article of apparel, and when the last signs of Miss Davis were gone, she threw herself across the bed, sobbing. She had never dreamed it would end like this! She hadn't meant—

Someone knocked sharply on the door. Forgetting that all her evidences of Miss Davis lay scattered about the room, she opened the door. She started in surprise. Sam Parker! And behind him, Lee Buchtel.

Lee spoke, in a formal voice. "Pardon us, Miss Milton, we have something—er—rather unpleasant to do—"

Sam Parker interrupted excitedly, "There! There's the wig!"

Patricia backed into the room in panic. This was not the way she wanted Lee to learn of Miss Davis! And then she drew a breath that was more a sob, seeing the look that leaped into Lee Buchtel's eyes at the sight of Miss Davis's wig and clothes. For a moment he seemed rigid, frozen. Then with hard, narrow eyes he looked at Patricia.

"Those are yours?" he asked shortly.

"Yes," she admitted, through stiff lips.

"The shoes — the dress — everything!" cried Sam Parker. "Exactly as Miss Blake described them!"

"I—I can explain," faltered Patricia. "It was only a joke—" And then she stopped, at the white look that came to Lee's face. A joke. It had been a joke—that beautiful, sacred hour this morning—

"And the stealing—that was only a joke too?" inquired Parker, smoothly.

"A joke, you say?"

"Stealing?" echoed Patricia, weakly.

"It would save time and trouble if you would simply produce what articles you have here, rather than make us search for them."

"Articles? What do you mean? I haven't stolen anything! I borrowed the dress and shoes and wig from Donna—"

"Miss Blake did not loan you anything," put in Lee, harshly.

Patricia stared. "But she did! You can ask her!"

"We have asked her," came the astounding answer.

"It is due to Miss Blake that we

have been able to trace you as Miss Davis," went on Parker, swiftly. "She suspected you for some time, and kept watching you. First, you were using such an unusual amount of waving fluid. Miss Blake thought you were careless, perhaps, and watched you. But she said you were, if anything, more economical than the other girls. You were, of course, doing away with it by some other—more profitable—way." He paused, impressively.

Patricia was unable to say a word. But she was remembering many little things that had been without meaning to her at the time.

"And then that order of cold cream. Miss Blake asked you if you would mind delivering it—remember? A gross of the large-sized jars. You left the store with them, very willingly, but from then on they were lost as far as the Buchtel Beauty Shops were concerned."

"I delivered them," stated Patricia, her eyes big and bewildered, "to the address Donna gave me—"

"Did you get a receipt?" demanded Lee, abruptly.

Patricia looked away, bleakly. "Donna told me it wasn't necessary—they were old customers—"

"That does not sound like Miss Blake," said Parker, softly. "She would not be occupying the position she now holds if she had no more business sense than that. And another thing. The day before you left the shop Miss Blake asked if you could change a fifty dollar bill for her. Remember?"

Patricia nodded, mutely. There were cold hands tightening about her heart.

"She had a purpose in doing that. That afternoon there had been missed from the cash register five new ten-dollar bills. In the change you made Miss Blake, there was one of those bills. Very foolishly, or carelessly, you thought it would not be noticed."

"You mean," stated Pat, lifelessly, "you mean I *stole* fifty dollars."

Parker smiled, held out his hands. Patricia looked at him a moment; his smile, and the dark, inscrutable look in his eyes, deepened. Feeling cold, she turned to Lee, surely *he*—

BUT Lee was staring at her with eyes that seemed not to see her. The thought flashed through her mind that he wasn't hearing Parker: he was living again last night on the black and silver water: he was living again this very morning, when he had caught her in his arms, and told her he loved her. He was wondering how that could be a joke—a joke—to her. He was wondering how any girl—

Patricia's heart twisted in unbearable pain. And she had meant it only for a lark—an amusing episode. She stared ahead with dark, heavily circled eyes. "Donna told me two weeks' advance salary for my vacation was lying above the register. That is the money I took."

"Aren't you usually paid by check?"

"Yes." Patricia's pale lips barely moved. "But this wasn't regular payday. She said to take the cash."

"It's a pity your story and Miss Blake's don't coincide better," observed Parker, smoothly. "Of course we might believe you, if it wasn't for this masquerade. You can't deny that. We have found out that the person who was masquerading in order to sell the goods she stole from the shop, was dressed like this identically."

So that was why Donna had suggested Pat wear this particular dress and wig! So easily—so smoothly—

she had accomplished her carefully planned scheme on the unsuspecting Patricia.

Lee seemed to rouse himself suddenly. He leaned forward, his eyes bright and hard. "Why," he asked tensely, "did you masquerade, if not for—that purpose? What was your idea? Tell me that."

Patricia looked at him, eyes dull with pain. The color had drenched from her face; her mouth was drawn. She said slowly, "I can't tell you that."

Lee drew back, his mouth a stern, thin line.

"Then what can we believe?" asked Parker. "You can't give one reason for your strange make-up. You must admit things look rather against you."

Patricia wet her lips. If he hadn't told her he loved her, maybe she could tell him . . . that she had dressed up to prove to him that not only beauty was dangerous . . . that homely girls could lure a man as well as pretty ones . . . that she wanted him to fall in love with her! But now the very idea was so horrible a mockery, that the words would not come.

"I have been talking things over with Mr. Buchtel," went on Parker, "and he agrees with me that you are so young we should not—er—take any severe measures. You will, of course, repay all you have taken—"

As long as she lived she would hear that oily, slurring voice! See that white, thin hand fingering a bright dotted tie—

"And how much," she asked slowly, "is that?"

"The closest we can figure is nine hundred and seventy-eight dollars."

"With that understanding for the present, I think we'll leave Miss Milton," spoke up Lee, through lips that were almost closed.

"I suppose," said Patricia, lifting her chin proudly, her eyes shining through tears, "it's no use for me to say I'm—innocent?"

Lee's features twisted suddenly, as though with pain, and he looked away. Parker said something — Patricia didn't hear—she didn't care what *he* thought. But that Lee could believe she was a thief—

When they were gone she did not move. Nine hundred and seventy-eight dollars. Nine hundred and seventy-eight—

With a sharp, bitter laugh she turned to the window. Nine hundred and seventy-eight dollars! How could she pay back so much money? But it was nothing compared to the stricken look in Lee Buchtel's eyes. He thought her guilty.

What was the use of fighting that? She had no desire to fight. She felt no anger, no fear. She was simply crushed with the weight of that: he believed her guilty.

FINALLY, after what seemed hours of lonely, hopeless brooding, faint anger began to stir in her at Parker and Donna. Why should they put this over on her? She remembered Donna: narrow-eyed, arrogant, superior. She remembered Parker, sneaking in and out of her booth. Clever—oh, they were diabolically clever. And they didn't care whom they hurt, to gain their own wicked ends.

There must be some way to prove her innocence. Some way to prove their guilt . . .

Patricia leaped to her feet, her eyes bright with excited inspiration. No—she didn't dare use the phone—Parker might be listening. She hurried downstairs, a little surprised that no one seemed to be watching her. The hotel

lobby was practically deserted; this was the hottest time of the afternoon.

She wrote a telegram, addressed to Donna Blake.

She couldn't possibly get an answer before six. That seemed an eternity away. Her room was intolerable. Better to walk and walk until she was too tired to think. She struck out toward the western side of the lake: country so wild that there was scarcely a path through the thick forest.

"I'll give them a merry chase," she told herself, "if they're trying to keep me in sight."

But for all the gallant lift of her chin, her heart was heavy. There was no light ahead. She loved Lee, and he—he thought her a thief. He couldn't possibly love her the least bit and think that.

Miss Davis? Oh, yes, he had loved Miss Davis. But Miss Davis was gone, and so was his love. He cared nothing for Patricia Milton.

Back to her room again. She tried in vain to relax, to read, to play the banjo—anything but think. Why didn't Donna answer?

There! The phone.

"A wire for E. Trail? Yes, I'll be right down—"

Her eyes fled over the slip of paper.

> Think you can double-cross me you're crazy. Have left note telling all. Now on my way. Good-by.

It was, of course, unsigned.

The third time Patricia read it the print was all blurred. Angrily she dashed away the blinding tears: no time now to waste. She must find Lee first—

He was not, the clerk informed her, in his room. He was at the lake to keep an appointment—

To keep an appointment! Not hers!

Of course not. He had made an appointment with Miss Davis, not Patricia—

He despised Patricia.

But, since she had to see him—

NO one stopped her. No one pointed to her, calling her a thief.

When she came to the water's edge she stopped, drew a sharp breath. For he was not looking at her either, as though she were a thief.

"Patricia!" She saw, even in this intense moment, that he was still pale. He held out his hands, and they were shaking. "Patricia! I've been waiting. I hoped—you would come—"

"Waiting—for me?" echoed Patricia, blankly. "Waiting for—me?"

"I've been trying to find you all afternoon—where have you been? I wanted to see you, to tell you that I know you're not—guilty. I never believed it of you for a moment, and it's been agony to me to think that maybe—you had reason—to believe—I did." His voice choked, hoarsely. "At first I was so hurt—when I saw that wig—I—I couldn't say anything. And then, when Parker went on, so smoothly that it all sounded rehearsed, I was sure he knew more than he was telling. I waited, not daring to let him see I suspected, hoping he'd give himself away to me later. But he didn't. I still believe he and Donna are behind this—"

"They are. Read that." Patricia thrust the telegram into his hands.

"But how did you get this? Is it from—"

"I sent a wire to Donna. I signed myself simply P., which could, of course, be Patricia, but Donna thought it was Parker. I told her I was leaving; she could guess why and where. I said E. Trail would receive any message she wished to send until six o'clock.

And there is the message she sent. I'm anxious to read the note she left."

Lee drew a long breath.

"I put my detectives to work two hours ago; they have doubtless got both it and her by now. Let's leave that to them, for you and I have other business to tend to—" He drew her to him, tilting her chin so that his eyes looked down into hers. "Patricia, will you be my Lady Golden Heart, now and forever?"

Slow tears welled into her eyes as she steadily returned his gaze. "But I—I'm not Miss Davis!"

"No, you're not, and never were. I wondered why I was so drawn to the drab little person you tried to be. But now I know. I've always loved Patricia Milton, and you couldn't hide Patricia behind any wigs or funny clothes. You've always been my Lady Golden Heart. Don't you know you were the inspiration for all that—even the name?"

"Oh," breathed Pat, faintly. "But I thought — you always said — you didn't like yellow hair—"

"But yours is gold. Pure gold." His hand touched it, tenderly. "I've always been afraid of yellow hair, because I was afraid it wasn't — pure gold. Oh, I know, Patricia, I've been all kinds of a fool, and I deserve to be punished. I was afraid to believe in you. I rather believed Donna—all the things she told me about you, how many times you'd been engaged, and how much fun you made of me. I tried so hard to believe you were like all the rest. I didn't dare for one moment to admit the love I've had for you all this time. But you're not going to punish me too hard, are you?"

"I don't know." said Pat, one dimple very faintly visible. "I think I will. I'll never tell you just why I was—Miss Davis."

His arms tightened about her. His dark head was bent to hers. "I'm going to hold you—just like this—until you do tell me—"

Patricia laughed softly, her golden-brown eyes shining. "Is that a threat, sir? 'Cause if it is, it's an awfully futile one!"

"Oh Pat, Pat—"

So she lifted her lips.

Concerning Love

To some, Love is no more than this—
A smile, a tear, a stolen kiss.
To some, Love is a silent word,
A tree that wind has never stirred . . .
To some, Love is a tower somewhere,
A tower too high for any stair.
But Love to me is—sweetheart, listen!
Tears and mirth that strangely christen
A mountain trail with sudden turn—
A cave fire, that must burn and burn . . .

—Queene B. Lister

A dangerous gleam came into his eyes. "What I want I get," he said

Love Comes Whistling

It was a very foolish song. Who would have dreamed that it beat time for the march of conquering Love?

By Belle Wyman

GAIL GERARD crept noiselessly down the stairway of the second rate boarding house, softly opening the heavy front door into the cold morning air. It was the 1st of September. The early morning air of Colorado has a chill, and Boulder lies nestled close to the mountains.

Drawing her warm coat more closely about her childish figure, and tightening her grip on the heavy suitcase, Gail hurried down the deserted street.

Only once did she stop on the way to the station. It was at the door of a small building marked "Irving Maxon, Real Estate." Through the letter slot she slipped an envelope of queer bumpiness, which fell to the floor within with a flop.

A sigh which was almost a sob escaped the soft red lips, and a close observer might have noted tear stains about the gentian blue eyes as they turned resolutely from the doorway to the railway station. On she hurried, until the low brick building was reached.

"Morning, Miss Gerard," hailed the genial station master. "You're out early. Takin' the seven o'clock?"

"Yes, have to go in to Denver. Thought I'd better get an early start." Gail's voice was huskier than usual, but the man was not observant.

"Need a ticket, or got a commute?"

"I have one, thanks."

"Won't seem right, goin' past the office and not seein' you. Comin' back to-night?"

"No. Not for several days."

"Hum. Bet Mr. Maxon won't like that. You sure do decorate the place. Helps business."

Gail laughed a little unsteadily. "I guess Mr. Maxon can manage without me."

The man hurried away as several other early travelers appeared.

The yellow interurban train stood opposite, ready for its trip to the city. A sharp whistle announced the arrival of the first incoming carrier.

Gail watched the cars stop and possibly twenty passengers alight. Glancing into the building to make sure that she was unobserved, she joined the incoming group and mingled with them as they hurried up the street.

A block away a taxi stand announced "Estes Park via the Glacier Route." A large bus stood at the curb.

Gail disappeared into the back seat, making herself very small and inconspicuous. A large, comfortable old lady climbed in beside her, hiding her almost completely.

"I don't see why this trip don't start later in the day," the stout neighbor rumbled. "I had to get up at five o'clock."

"It's a long way if you make the complete circle," Gail volunteered, burrowing deeper behind the broad shoulder. "I'm sure you will enjoy it."

"I better. I ain't never been in the mountains before. My nephew said this was a fine way to see a lot of them in a hurry."

"All ready," called the driver as he sprang behind the wheel. The heavy car swung out of town and into beautiful Boulder Cañon.

THE city left behind, Gail breathed a sigh of relief. He wouldn't look for her here if he looked at all.

The station master would say that she had gone to Denver. He'd probably be glad she was gone, especially since she had returned his ring. Maybe he would give it to the expensively dressed blonde.

The panorama of color which unrolled before the passengers of the Glacier Route bus was lost upon the slight figure in the back seat.

Again she saw the tiny office which had held so much happiness for her during the past few months since she finished high school. Miss Fordham, the middle-aged stenographer, sitting at the back window tapping out bills of sale, kindly but cynical; in the foreground Irving Maxon, tall, dark, and handsome, so brilliant, so convincing,

so considerate of her inexperience. Learning the bookkeeping had been easy under his direction. How could she help falling in love with him?

It was just a week since he had given her the small diamond which materialized all her dreams. The diamond which she had sealed into the envelope slipped through the slot in the door.

A sharp scream brought Gail back to the moving bus. She glanced at the woman beside her who was clinging to the seat in terror.

"Stop, stop, I say; I'm going to get out. We'll fall over the bank." Gail reassured the frightened woman, who finally subsided as the steep embankment was safely passed.

The soft rumble of the car soon lulled her back into reverie. It had all ended yesterday with the advent of the tall, richly dressed, too blond woman who had thrown her arms about Irving, gazing at him hungrily from heavily mascaraed eyes.

"Maxy darling, I've come for you. The Big Shot sent me. He's squared everything. There's a deal on, and he needs you. The apartment has been a regular jail without you, sweety. Now we'll make up for all the time you've lost hiding in this hick town. Aren't you glad?"

Irving's face had contracted with fury.

"Shut up, you fool," in a hoarse whisper. "When did you come here? Why didn't you wire or write?" He had struggled from the encircling arms, raising his voice. "Let's go to the hotel where we can talk. Miss Gerard, I will be back shortly," and they were gone.

Miss Gerard. He had never called her that before. At first it had been Miss Gail, then just Gail, and finally, Baby. No one had ever called her Baby before. At first it seemed queer, but his voice when he said it was a caress. Of course she was young, and small, which might account for his choice as a term of endearment.

The richly dressed woman—Gail had seen the beautiful square cut emerald on the third finger of her left hand. How small and cheap her diamond looked in comparison.

"I knew it," Miss Fordham snapped. "I always knew there was something phony about him. I've copied too many intricate contracts not to recognize when there's a joker in 'em. Run on home, kid, I'll look out for things. You look all washed up."

ON through the gorge rumbled the red bus, past mines and summer camps. The clear blue waters above Nederland Dam lay before them, were gone, and they drove along a high road from which a view of the majestic Continental Divide was visible.

The chauffeur shouted over his shoulder, pointing down a side road: "That's the way to the Hell Hole country and Lindbergh Peak, one of the wildest and most spectacular parts of Colorado. Some day soon it will be a park, easily accessible to tourists."

"Lindbergh Peak?" The stout woman faced Gail in an effort to glimpse the point of interest.

"Washington hasn't made the name official yet," Gail volunteered; "but it is typical of him. Stands alone like a sentinel against the sky. I've read so much about that country. I'm going into it some day. But you have to make it by pack trains now. The road only runs part way."

"No roads—h-m—then that's one thing I ain't going to see. I'm not trusting my life to any of them bawling jackasses."

Gail mentally congratulated the burros. She continued telling her companion about the country, glad to forget for a time the events of the past few hours. They were so puzzling. She could not understand.

It was not long before the bus reached a town, high above the distant plain.

"I'm stopping here," Gail called to the driver. "I'll walk to the store."

She descended to the smoothly surfaced road. Reaching the general store, she inquired for a conveyance to Stapp's Lake Lodge.

"Their truck is here now. The Chev. at the door," the man behind the counter advised her. "Andy's loading. He'll take you up."

"Thanks." Gail approached the small truck as the man at the back end turned toward the telephone office. She lifted her suitcase into the rear, then took the seat beside the wheel.

"Hello? Going to Stapp's?"

"Yes." Gail did not even glance at the speaker.

"O. K. We're off." An overalled figure sprang into the car beside her. They ascended the steep grade to the main road, later turning into a narrower one which led far back in the woods to the resort.

Gail's thoughts wandered back to the little office in Boulder. What were they doing? Had Irving found the envelope? Had she simplified things for him by going? What had he done about the blond woman? Was he going to return with her to the "Big Shot"? Who or what was a Big Shot? Why had she left? He might be able to explain. Maybe he did love her. Perhaps the blond woman was a relative. A furtive tear hung on the black lashes.

A soft trilling whistle roused her. A lilting tune issued from the lips of the man seated beside her. It radiated courage and happiness. What was the name of the laughing melody?

Almost with the thought, the whistling drifted into a song, the words sung in a clear barytone:

"Keep your sunny side up—up—
Let your laughter come through—do—
Be like two fried eggs, stand upon your legs,
Keep your sunny side up."

The low whistle had brought her away from the doubts which possessed her. The song, when it broke forth, held a challenge. She glanced shyly at her companion, who had seemingly forgotten her existence. The steady gray eyes were fixed on the jutting point of Saw Tooth with dreamy appreciation.

GAIL studied him for the first time. Crinkled hair of an indefinite brown, faded where the sun had lingered too long. Eyes dreamy now, but with a hint of strength in their warm depths. Rugged features which could never be called handsome, but which held a small boy attraction.

In contrast appeared the face she had left in Boulder. Dark, passionate eyes, clear cut profile, smoothly shining blue-black hair. She could not imagine Irving singing a song about two fried eggs!

A low laugh burst from the soft mouth at the thought.

The man beside her turned inquiringly in her direction. Then laughed in sympathy, fine lines deepening about his eyes.

"It's a great day. Glad you've discovered it. Been up here before?"

Gail shook her head.

"Take off your hat, then, and be comfortable. Around the next curve

is a picture, and I want you to enjoy it. No one can really enjoy a view with a hat on."

Gail hesitated a moment. The hat was removed, disclosing a riot of dark curls. He nodded, then again gave his attention to the road. A curve brought a sparkling lake into view.

"We specialize in lakes up here. This is by no means our most beautiful one, but it does very well for an introduction."

Gail gasped at the wonder of it.

"Is—is that the camp opposite?" she breathed.

"Oh, no, Stapp's have half a dozen lakes all of their own further on. This is just a sort of suggestion of what you may expect."

The car skirted the shore, each foot of progress unfolding new beauties.

"I'd like to stay here. I know nothing could be lovelier," Gail whispered.

A ringing laugh answered her. "Say, you ain't seen nothing yet." And they swept around another curve.

Gail relaxed, turning toward him. A question burst out before she could stop it. "What's your name?"

A broad grin lit his face.

"You mean—?" "Yes, Andy"

"Andy. Andy Webster. Christened Anthony, but nobody ever called me that."

Andy—Anthony Webster. She was willing to bet that if he had been christened Irving, he would have been called Irv.

Another bend brought them into camp, where Andy stopped the truck.

A hostess came forward as Gail sprang to the ground.

"I'm Miss Stapp. Glad to welcome you." Gail at once decided that she liked the wholesomeness of the other.

"I—I want to stay two weeks. And I want to rent your typewriter. One of the girls from school was here last summer and you allowed her to use it."

Miss Stapp's smile was friendly.

"Certainly; but first we must get you settled." She pointed to the many log cabins dotting the shallow bowl in which the camp was situated.

"There are a number of vacancies. The season is about over. Let's see, there's Beaver," pointing to the first one; "Three Trees, Pioneer, and Columbine. Which do you prefer?"

GAIL gazed at first one cabin, then another. Her eyes traveled past them, past the corral to a tiny green-roofed cottage set alone on top of the further slope.

"Is that one taken—up there?" she asked, pointing.

"No; one of the stable men built it for himself last year. But it's so far away."

"Please, Miss Stapp. I want to be alone."

"Very well. If you like. We'll have Andy take your things there. That's the name of it, All Alone."

The necessary instructions given, the two girls proceeded slowly up the steep path to the cabin.

"Are you a typist?" asked the hostess. "I hope you haven't a great deal of work to do."

"I have never used a typewriter much. I want to learn the touch system. Have the offer of a position in Denver if I can type. Do you think it can be learned in two weeks?"

"I should think so, if you work hard. But you won't have much time for trips and fun."

"I didn't come here for a vacation. I came to learn typing. I shan't meet any of the visitors."

"I see," but her voice was inquiring. "Is there any way in which I can help?"

Gail met the sympathetic gaze of the older girl, and decided to confide in her.

"Yes. You see, I have been working in Boulder. My employer and I were engaged. It was broken off suddenly because of another woman. I don't want my employer to know where I am. A number of Boulder people have seen me in the office, so I shall have to keep out of sight. Then, when I learn to type, I can go to Denver and take the position which Mr. Babbitt offered."

"I see," Miss Stapp nodded. She had seen Gail in the real estate office; had met Irving Maxon, so it was easy to fill in details from her imagination. "Have you any relatives? You seem pretty young, and hardly the type to be traveling about alone."

"Dad owns a farm over east. He sent me to Boulder to high school. There are four of us children. I'm the oldest. Ted will be ready for high soon. I'll have to help him through. Dad hasn't much money, so I have to have a good job by then."

"Of course. That's all right. And I'll try to keep your presence here a secret."

Gail looked her appreciation.

Andy swung up the hill behind them, carrying Gail's bag, passed and disappeared through the doorway of All Alone.

As they approached the cottage he reappeared. "If you folks will take a stroll I'll have the cabin in order in a jiffy."

"Andy is a peach," Miss Stapp volunteered. "Don't know what we would do without him. He cares for the horses, helps guide, does some of the

cooking on Sundays when we have an unusually big crowd, and even helps with the washing and cleaning when we are shorthanded. He was with us last summer."

Gail heard his low whistle from within the cabin:

"Keep your sunny side up—up—
Be like two fried eggs—"

She laughed shakily. Such a silly little song—but—it made her feel better to be reminded.

GAIL sat studiously before the clicking typewriter. Her back ached from the unaccustomed application. She had been in the cabin All Alone for three solitary days, practicing long hours before the keyboard. She had had no idea there was so much to learn. "asdfg asdfg; lkjh; lkjh qwert qwert poiuy poiuy zxcvb zxcvb /.,mn." How she envied Miss Fordham those flying fingers which found no difficulty in the most intricate contracts!

It was evening. A pale moon gleamed among twinkling stars, and below, the lights in the cabins looked like an inverted sky.

Gail longed to join the friendly group before the fireplace in the lounge, but dared not. There were too many Boulder people at the camp.

They might return to town and tell Irving Maxon where to find her. But did he want to find her? Was her fear of pursuit unfounded? Did she really want to stay hidden?

Gail could see Irving's dark eyes melting into hers as he murmured, "I love you, Baby. I've never cared for any one before. I'll take you to dear old Chi some day and dress you like nobody's business. We'll see the bright lights, and you'll be brightest of them all." How could he say that when the blond woman was waiting for him there in the apartment which was like a jail?

A low whistle drifted into the open window:

"Keep your sunny side up—up—"

Turning out the electric bulb, Gail moved to the rear window. Behind the cabin, against a big rock, stood a long figure, the dim glow of a pipe visible against the blurred outline of a face.

What was Andy doing up here? The notes called her; called with an insistancy she could not refuse.

"Be like two fried eggs, stand upon
your legs—"

She was lonely. Here was some one to whom she could talk. Snatching a wrap, she crept toward the pipe glow.

"Hello, hermit; join the lonely troubadour," he greeted.

She sank upon a log, relaxing tired muscles.

His fingers caressed the strings of a guitar, the soft notes mingling with the sounds of the night. In a moment his voice blended with them.

"When it's springtime in the Rockies," he sang the chorus through. "I like that. Seems to fit a night like this. Know just how the fellow felt back East, lonesome for these big old mountains."

"I don't know. I haven't been in them much until I came up here, though we could see them from the farm—over east."

"How far east?"

"About a hundred miles. I used to watch them from the kitchen window, and wonder what they were like close up. This is the first time I've really

been in them. Off the highways, I mean."

"But you've lived in Boulder." His voice invited confidences.

"Yes. I went to high school there. We used to have picnics up the cañon, but there was always a crowd. We didn't do much exploring."

"You haven't done much exploring since you came here. Just hammered the typewriter. Bet you haven't seen Lake Helen or the Lily Pond. I saw you over by the swimming hole the other night. Was afraid to butt in, so didn't make myself known."

Gail hesitated. "I—didn't want to meet the guests. And—I've been busy. It isn't easy to learn typing in two weeks."

"So that's it. Well, you've got to have exercise. All work and no play, you know. Let's stroll over to the Pond. It's in bloom." He extended calloused hands to help her rise. How different they felt from Irving's cool, well-manicured fingers!

Following the narrow path down the steep incline, they climbed the hill on the other side of the village, and Lily Pond gleamed below.

Again Gail thought of an inverted heaven, though now the stars were pale lilies in a sea of black. Andy guided her to a flat bottomed boat which he pushed easily into the water. A deft pull and they were amid the silvery blossoms.

Gail breathed a sigh of pure ecstasy.

"It just isn't real," she murmured. "I feel like the Little Lame Prince sitting in his magic cloak sailing among the stars."

"Thought you'd like it. Hereafter you're going out every night. It will be good for the typing."

For an hour they floated among the lily pads. Sometimes Andy whistled, again he broke into song, accompanied by a soft strumming on the guitar. He spoke of the crowd of tourists he had taken up Saw Tooth the day before. She appreciated his avoidance of personal subjects.

They wandered back through the camp like ghosts in a land of shadows. Reaching the steep path to All Alone, Andy took her hand, pulling her gently up the path. Gail liked the firm pressure of his hard hand. It was not the loverlike feel of Irving's long, slim fingers as they had caressed hers that memorable night he had told her that he loved her. Irving—Irving—if only he were with her, and there were no blond woman. How deliriously happy she would be.

ANDY kept his promise, calling for her every evening except once, when he took a party to the top of Mount Audubon and they slept above timber line to make an early ascent.

The typewriting was going better now. Gail could rattle off, "The quick brown fox jumped over the lazy dog" without hesitation.

Soon she would use her newly acquired knowledge to write Mr. Babbitt about the position in his office. What if he had not meant it? What if the place he had in mind had been filled? She must find work soon.

Miss Stapp had offered her a position as hostess at the camp, but she could not accept, much as she was learning to love the place.

She might meet Irving. Irving and the blond woman. Were they sweethearts again? She could not bear the thought. Was trying to forget. But his face haunted her. The feel of his arms. His lips.

A low whistle startled her. She

glanced at the clock. Eight thirty. It was Andy. She hurried to meet him.

"Hello, hermit. It isn't quite dark yet. I got through early. Let's take the long way round to the Lily Pond. You need exercise."

"I know. It is hard staying in the cabin all day, but I've accomplished a lot. Pretty soon I'll be able to go to work."

Andy made no reply. Leading the way along the ridge above camp they reached the Lily Pond just as a pale white moon rose above the fir trees.

Andy busied himself launching the boat, then pulled it to the far side where the moon made a shining path.

"Would you be interested in hearing why I'm up here, hermit?" he asked after a long silence. These silences were so comforting. A bond of friendliness seemed to infold them.

"Yes—I suppose so." Gail wondered if she were to be asked why *she* was here. She had never told Andy about Irving. She couldn't.

Her companion continued: "You've heard about Hell Hole and Lindbergh Peak, haven't you?"

"Yes, it's that wild country south of here."

"Dad owns a quarter section right on the brink of the Hell Hole, with a perfect view of the peak beyond. It's almost inaccessible now, except by pack trains; but there's to be a road built soon. I'm crazy about the country. Dad and I used to camp there every summer; we had a shack. When the road is built, people will want to go there and stay."

Gail searched the face before her. Then Andy wasn't just a roustabout. He was a landowner.

He continued: "I've saved enough from the income of our two Denver apartments which dad lets me manage to build and equip a place like this. I'd like to run it. It would be only three or four months a year. We'd be free to do anything we chose the rest of the time, but somehow, 'When it's springtime in the Rockies,' I'd be wanting to come back. We'd have a real place, and a real job to come to."

Gail's eyes were wide—I—we—what did he mean? Was he trying to tell her that he was to be married? The thought hurt.

"I wanted you to know something about me, Gail, because—you see—I love you. Ever since I found you in the truck at Ward I've pictured you with me, watching the moon go down behind Lindbergh Peak. Wanted to take you down the steep sides of the Hell Hole and show you the giant bowlders. You've learned to love this place during the past ten days, so I know you would like mine. It's so much wilder—more spectacular. Could you? I mean—do you love me?"

Gail's voice was full of pain. "Oh, Andy, I do like you. You've been a wonderful pal. I feel more comfortable with you than with any one I ever met. But, I'm sorry; you see, there's some one else."

"I—didn't know. Then let's just forget it." His voice, which held so much pain and disappointment, changed to the old lightness.

"Let's sing 'Keep Your Sunny Side Up,'" and he broke into the rollicking chorus, Gail joining in. What a pal he was—loyal and fine. His sudden hilarity did not deceive her. But Irving—he was her dream lover, whose kisses left her breathless.

THE next day Gail labored even more arduously at the typing. It was hard to concentrate. Andy's laughing eyes and ruddy face

haunted her. Would last night spoil their friendship? How could she live without that? He was all that had made these days liveable. He had sung the peppiest tunes and laughed and joked all of the way home, promising to see her again at the usual time tonight.

Toward evening Gail followed a little-used trail behind the cabin for a breath of fresh air and a flexing of tired muscles. Then she hurried back, determined to put in another hour of work before Andy appeared. She paused breathless at the corner of the cottage, then pushed open the door and stepped over the threshold.

A cry escaped her lips as she gazed spellbound at the figure before her. Her fingers sought her throat. It wasn't—it couldn't be real.

"Ir—Irving," she breathed.

"Of course, Irving. You didn't think I would let you get away, did you?" He took a step toward her. "I've known where you were for a week. Thought I had better settle all my business before coming for you. I've sold the real estate office, and we're going back to dear old Chi. My former employer has offered me a very good thing. Plenty of money and very short hours. We leave at once. My car is in the shed. How soon can you be ready? You won't need clothes, for I'll dress you up when we reach the city."

Gail stood motionless. Irving—Irving wanted her! Her bright eyes searched his face. Irving. His keen black eyes—so compelling—the flashing smile—so convincing—

"And, Baby, I've brought you a new ring. A real one—not the little diamond."

He reached in his vest pocket, and, advancing, took her hand. A feeling of nausea assailed her as a bright green stone flashed—and fell to the floor as Gail sprang back.

"I—I don't want it. It was hers. You gave it to her, then took it away. I don't want it. I don't want you. I never want to see you or the ring again."

A dangerous gleam shot into the piercing eyes. "Say, listen, Baby, you aren't going to walk out on me. I've sent word that my wife is coming back with me, and you're going." His jaw tightened.

"No." Gail was surprised at her own conviction.

"Come, Baby." The flashing smile became coaxing. "Let's talk it over. I know you love me. You've loved me ever since you came into the office applying for a job. Think I didn't know? And I love you. We'll have a swell apartment. I'll dress you in gorgeous clothes, and we'll have a whoopee party every night. If you don't like the emerald, I'll get you the biggest diamond on LaSalle Street. Why, Baby, we'll have money to burn."

"No!" Gail backed through the open door. "Go! I never want to see your face again. I hate you. How soon would it be before you threw me over for some newer face? I hate you!"

An ugly sneer disfigured the handsome mouth.

"All right." He stooped, retrieving the gleaming stone which now matched his eyes. "I've never begged any jane to share my dough. They do the begging. See? Go on, work for ten dollars a week. But you'll be sorry," and he stepped past her into the gathering dusk.

Gail watched the diminishing figure. Heard the hum of his motor, saw the

tiny speck of red disappear among the trees.

QUICKLY she ran down the hill to Miss Stapp's cottage. It was only a few minutes until she was back in All Alone.

A familiar whistle called her from the shadows.

"Andy — Andy — take me to the Pond." Her eyes were bright in the deepening shadows. "Let's hurry. I want to see the moon shining on the lilies. I want to watch the stars."

Andy gave her a puzzled glance as he led the way over the narrow path. Softly he whistled, "Keep your sunny side up—up." She wondered if he was whistling for her benefit or his own.

Together they descended to the lake. He shoved off and guided the boat to the opposite shore. The flowers looked like a glorified Milky Way, thought Gail; no lights in Chicago made by man could compare with this scene high in the Rockies.

"Let's just rest, Andy. Light your pipe."

Silence fell, broken finally by the small voice of Gail.

"I—I—Andy—I had company tonight."

"Yes, I know. He asked me which cabin was yours. I knew it must be the man you love. Are you happy, Gail?"

"Awfully happy, Andy. Happier than I've ever been in my life, I think."

"Then I'm happy, too, dear. I suppose you will be leaving us soon."

"No, Andy, I—I asked Miss Stapp if I couldn't have the hostess job for the few remaining weeks. She seemed delighted. I—thought it would be good experience."

"But, Gail, he won't like that, will he?"

"No, but he is going to Chicago tonight. He isn't coming back. He wanted to take me where bright lights burned all night—but—I thought of the moon over Lindbergh Peak. I couldn't go. I'd be too lonely when it's springtime in the Rockies."

Andy's pipe dropped to the seat beside him.

"You mean—oh, darling, you can't mean that you were mistaken about him! That the mountains have claimed you, too?"

"Yes, Andy, the mountains — and you."

Andy slipped to the bottom of the boat before her. His arms tenderly infolded her and his lips pressed hers as though he would never never drink his fill of the sweet warm draft of her love.

Gail's soul thrilled to the joy of his touch, the ecstasy of his youthful fervor. This, this was love. Trust, friendship, understanding, and love, a glorious bond to knit them tighter through the years.

She snuggled close to his beating heart.

"Oh, Andy, I love you. There is no one. There never could be any one but you. Hold me forever and ever."

Andy's lips closed rapturously over hers.

"My darling, my own. Just you and me — and Lindbergh — when it's springtime in the Rockies."

The man in the shadow flinched. Her hair—tousled!

Kisses

He dared his best friend to prove his fiancée untrue!

By Kathrine Nyler

"THEY say he kisses every girl he meets," Gay laughed. "Don't you know Caryl will be mad when she hears about Harry's bet?"

Gladyce leaned forward interestedly. "Harry's bet?" she inquired in her affected little-girl voice.

"Yes," Gay told her, "Harry's bet. At the club this morning he bet Tom Loring he couldn't kiss Caryl the first night he met her."

"But," Gladyce objected, "that doesn't make sense. Why, 'most every one knows that if a girl likes a man all right, and he isn't a bad sort, she'll let him kiss her."

Laughter bubbled from Gay's vivid mouth. "That's what makes it such a terrific scream! Every one knows that but the blindly adoring Harry!"

"Sh-h-h!" Gladyce cautioned. "Here she comes. Let's don't tell her about Harry's bet. It 'll be great fun to watch and see what happens."

A tall, slender girl, dressed in blue-

gray tweeds, made her way gracefully down the length of the veranda to them.

Her shining black hair, ornamented rather than covered by a gay béret, was drawn back in loose waves to cuddle in a chignon on the nape of her white neck. Her rather wide red mouth smiled gayly at them as she came, but the Irish blue eyes in their black fringe made light mockery of the smile.

"Hello," she greeted carelessly, half sitting, half leaning against the high, old-fashioned banister. "What's new?"

"Tom Loring," Gay told her with audacious daring. "Have you met him yet?"

"No, but Harry tells me that I must meet him to-night by all means," Caryl drawled, her eyes meeting those of Gay with disconcerting frankness. "He tells me that his friend is a Greek god for looks, and that he kisses every girl he meets if he likes her enough to bother."

"And if he doesn't like her?"

"He is just marvelously nice to her instead."

"Do you suppose he'll kiss — you, Caryl?" Gladyce tried to mask her insatiable curiosity with wide-eyed naïveté.

The gentian eyes were mocking her openly now.

"There's some as has and some as hasn't. Maybe the odds are even. Who can tell?" She nodded a brief goodby to each of them and went swiftly down the wide steps and winding walk to her low roadster at the curb. The muffled whir of a motor, a careless wave of her hand and she was gone.

"D'you think she knows?" Gladyce asked with bated breath.

"I don't know," Gay confessed her bewilderment. "She sounded as if she did. I wonder."

THE atmosphere was brittle with excitement when the dance was an hour old, and still no Caryl. She had chosen to come alone since her home was only just across the street from that of the Grahams, where Bess Graham was entertaining thirty members of Lantan's select younger set. Every one present knew of the bet by then. Just as every one knew that Harry had loved Caryl since romper days. But his was a love that held more of shy adoration than youth's young fire.

"What ever induced Harry Morrison to make such a fool bet, anyway?" a young man with sandy hair wondered aloud.

"Some one told me that he'd heard about Caryl giving other men a casual kiss now and then. Of course he doesn't believe it, but this bet will make sure," a freckled boy with enormous shoulders volunteered. "Tom Loring is his best friend. Can you tie that?"

There was a stir at the door. The clustering crowd about it parted to admit Caryl, who proved with her entrance that a lovely woman is worth waiting for. She was beautiful in a gown of sky-blue satin and billowing tulle. Above its daring décolleté her vivid mouth taunted and the black-fringed eyes mocked them all.

"Hello, everybody!" she called gayly. "What's doing?"

Harry hurried forward. "You're late," he told her, his voice deepening tenderly as it always did when speaking to Caryl. "We have a bit of a start on you, but the music and the night are just getting good." They swung into the dance together.

"Why are you late, Caryl?" he

asked again when she still didn't speak.

"Does it matter?" she countered lightly. Then broached the subject foremost in his mind. "Wasn't there some one you wanted me to meet?" Her eyes were defying him openly.

A swift shadow of surprise crossed the bronzed face at her defiance. "Yes, a college friend from Houston, Tom Loring."

"I'm all on pins with expectation!"

"Tom's keen for it, too." The music stopped with a triumphant wail, and he led her across the polished floor toward a tall blond man in immaculate white linens. "Caryl, this is Tom Loring, my side-kick of college days."

Blue eyes met blue eyes while the man bowed ever so slightly. "I have heard so much about you that I scarcely feel the need of a formal introduction," he told her.

"The introduction is the only thing that is formal here," Caryl returned, laughing. "We live and love and let live and love here in Lantan."

Again the frank face of Harry betrayed a faint surprise.

Through the dances that followed the buzz of tongues intermingled with tapping feet. Tom Loring was courting Caryl quite openly while Harry watched with grim eyes as she as openly reciprocated. He saw them as they escaped the room by way of a window to stroll in the shimmering moonlight. But he made no move to follow.

For the better part of three dances the man in white and the girl in blue were missing from the floor. Every one speculated on the outcome of the absence except the tall, bronzed man brooding in the nook just inside the window. In his brown eyes a vague look of hurt was beginning to dawn. Almost he answered the gazes that turned toward him: "I know, yes, I know. It's true! It's true!"

CARYL'S light laugh preceded her into the expectant room. To the over-sharp ears of some it seemed affectedly light and gay. As she entered through the window, the blue tulle of her gown billowing mistily about her slender figure, her tousled hair seemed a knife-thrust to the heart of the man who stood there. The dark waves were tumbled and the chignon hung perilously, caught by only two hairpins. It might be the wind—he caught at a straw. But no, there was only the most gentle of southern breezes blowing.

Tom Loring followed Caryl immediately, his long fingers nervously combing his blond hair. He alone seemed perturbed.

Caryl's searching eyes found Harry. She came toward him as the music started, both hands outstretched. "Dance with me?" she asked in a voice that reached each listening ear.

His hesitation was perceptible as the tatters of his broken dream hovered between them. As his eyes met the persistent bright mockery of hers he could not know that she was dangerously near to tears. He only knew that his star was an earthly thing. That she had stepped down from her pedestal with feet of clay.

There was no blame in his heart. Only a dull pain and a sense of loss.

He hesitated so long that she asked him again, while those whom she called her friends waited with bated breath. "Dance with me, Harry?" and a note of pleading crept into the deliberate lightness of her voice against her will.

It wakened Harry to her need of him. He caught her outstretched hands slowly and drew her into his arms.

The darky musicians played the sobbing waltz as though they sensed the near tragedy in their midst. As Harry and Caryl swayed to the slow rhythm, Harry realized how very dear to him was the girl he was holding in his arms. For the first time his thoughts of her contained desire as well as love. And for the first time in all the years they had danced together he realized the poignant joy of her slim young body following his through the intricate maneuvers of the dance. The loss of the pedestal had left a void. The girl in his arms filled that void.

"Caryl!" he whispered. "Caryl!" And he led her from the room by way of the window through which she had so lately entered with his friend.

Out in the maze of the bewildering Southern moonlight, he turned swiftly to face her. "Caryl," he whispered again as he took her into his arms. As his eager lips sought her lifted ones the handsome blond head of Tom Loring seemed to come between them. He thrust the startled girl from him, his fingers biting into her bare shoulders.

"So kissing you is as easy as that," he sneered in his disillusion. "All these years I have thought myself unworthy of kissing you. Yet you can let a man you've just met hold you close like this—" he caught her to him fiercely, "and kiss you like this!" his angry mouth bruised her soft red lips.

Because she made no resistance the iron band of his arms dropped away after a moment and he turned to sit on a bench with his face in his hands. Caryl stood as he had left her, the wide red mouth quivering slightly and the blue, blue eyes now black with unshed tears. She half lifted her hands in a pleading gesture. But, with abrupt decision, she drew them back and erected her drooping head proudly.

"Harry," she said with the old mockery in her voice, "you have been coming to my house to see me since you were ten and I six. Yet to-night is the first time you have kissed me. Why?"

The man on the bench shrugged and raised his head. "Does it matter?" he asked coldly.

Caryl bit her lip hard, hard to still its trembling. "It might," she said.

Harry rose slowly and came to stand in front of her, facing her in the moonlight. His hands were clutched into futile fists and his deep voice was harsh. "I don't see how it can matter now," he told her. "But if you must know, I didn't kiss you because I thought you were too—too good." He laughed shortly at his own lost illusion.

"Harry," Caryl's throaty contralto broke his laugh, "have you ever kissed any girls at all?"

The brown eyes betrayed momentary surprise. "Of course."

"Girls in our crowd, I mean," she persisted.

"Yes."

"Then, tell me, do you think your kissing them made them—bad?" She leaned toward him in her earnestness.

"Of course not, Caryl. What on earth are you driving at?" His eyes searched the white face before him.

"Why did you kiss *them*, Harry, when you have always refused to kiss *me?*"

"Don't be silly, Caryl!" he admonished, his tones quick with impatience. "That's different."

"How?"

FOR a moment he seemed at a loss. Then, "I didn't know until to-night that you would let a man kiss you so casually—even me," he countered abruptly.

"It's all your fault if any men have kissed me at all," Caryl retorted angrily.

"*My* fault?"

"Yes," she told him fiercely, "your fault. You say you thought I was too good to kiss. You never even acted like you wanted to kiss me. Yet you can import a friend of yours to test my fidelity. Fidelity! What have you ever done to cause me to be faithful to *you?*" She was choking back the sobs.

Harry Morrison was dazed by her outburst, but it told him a lot he had wanted to know. He caught the sobbing girl in his arms. "Caryl," he pleaded, "can you ever forgive me for being such a blind fool? I—I was just kind of waiting for you to grow up, honey. And you always seemed too lovely to touch. Can you forgive me for being such a—"

CARYL interrupted. "Harry, d-did you really make a b-bet with that T-Tom Loring that he c-couldn't k-kiss me?"

"Well—er—kind of," he stammered.

Caryl's sobs were gone and she was dangerously cool. "What did you bet him?"

"Why—er—you see, he saw you this morning when you passed the club in your car and made the remark that you looked pretty enough to kiss and—er—"

"You bet him he couldn't do it?"

"I was only joking, Caryl. Really, I—"

"Just what wager did you put on my susceptibility to men in general, Harry?" she repeated.

"Oh, it wasn't that, Caryl! Truly, I—"

"What wager, Harry?" she cut in.

"I—er—I bet the—er—the diamond ring I bought for you that he—"

"Diamond ring for me?" Caryl interrupted.

"Y-yes," Harry told her humbly. "I've been carrying it around for two months trying to find the right moment to—"

"To what?" she encouraged as he hesitated.

"To ask you to marry me."

"Is that a proposal?" she asked softly.

The man raised hopeful brown eyes to her gentian blue ones. "Oh, Caryl, do you mean—"

"Where is the ring, Harry?"

A swift shadow crossed the handsome face. "I—I'll get you another," he evaded.

"Why another, Harry? I'm sure this one is just right."

"Well—er—you see—er—I lost the bet."

"Did you?" she quizzed mockingly. "Are you sure?"

Something in her face caused renewed hope to spring up in his own. "Caryl, don't tease me. Do you mean that he didn't kiss you after all?"

He caught her hand.

"No, Harry, you great blind bear! He told me that you loved me, but felt a wee bit afraid to tell me so. And that you had the loveliest solitaire for me. In fact all we talked about was a certain Harry Morrison!"

"But, Caryl, your hair?" he asked tremulously.

"I tousled it and his too to test your faith in me—"

"Well, I'm going to tousle now and kiss you too!" And as the dark waves of hair cascaded down about her gleaming shoulders, he kissed her fiercely, tenderly on her wide red mouth.

BETTY-LOU'S LOVE QUEST

The Picture on the Cover

PART VI

Love's Rainbow

BETTY-LOU opened her eyes on a rain-washed, wind-swept world. At first she was content merely to lie and watch the window curtains billowing in the salt sea breeze, the pale sun filtering through.

Then Memory crept back.

She lifted her arm. The fingers seemed to have grown transparent overnight, and there was a bandage around the elbow — she could not bend it.

"Don!" she called.

And suddenly he was there, his warm, strong hand closing around the fragile one.

"Yes, darling?"

He had called her darling! Oh, beautiful word!

"I thought — perhaps — I'd only dreamed that you'd come back," she said.

"I'm back for good," he answered a little unsteadily, "to see that you get better."

And then she was getting better—was almost well. There were days on the beach—they'd arrange her long chair under a bright umbrella, and Don would carry her down and ensconce her in it, and wait on her, stay beside her, read or talk or—just stay.

One afternoon he looked up from the book to find she was not listening to the story.

"What is it, Betty-Lou?" he asked.

"I was just thinking," she said softly. "We've never made up."

"Made up?"

"Our fight, you know. Nobody's said, 'I'm sorry,' or 'I forgive you.'"

"Is that the only way to make up?"

"It's the way they always do in stories."

"I'll say it if you want me to, darling. 'I'm sorry.'"

"But that's the part that belongs to me!" cried Betty-Lou.

He closed her mouth with a kiss. "Does it matter?" he whispered. "So long as we're together again?"

She lay quiet for a while; then her eyes danced. "I guess I won't be in any Beauty Parade this year," she said. and laughed. "You were right."

"But, darling, you were right, too. I needn't have been so bossy about it. I'll never be like that again."

"I like 'em masterful," said Betty-Lou. Then, in a little wail: "My vacation is almost over!"

"Vacation!" he exclaimed. "Do you think I'll let you go back to an office?"

"Ladies must live," she murmured.

"Well, I'm going to take care of you from now on. We'll be married as soon as we get back to town."

He drew her into his arms and kissed the top of her bent head. "What's so funny now?" he demanded, for she was shaking with suppressed laughter.

"Oh, Don, you're luscious!" she gurgled. "You just said you'd not be bossy any more—and then you arrange my whole life without consulting me at all!"

Then her mood changed, and she put the well arm around his neck and looked at him with her heart shining through her eyes.

"My dearest and my best," she whispered low.

Don lowered his head and put the next kiss where a kiss belongs. And they held each other close, and dreamed their dream in silence.

Theirs was summer time love—yes, but strong enough to endure through winter, too. Sun after storm, peace after strife they had found, and the rainbow of promise curved above their heads, so close the fair hair mingled with the raven, and they glimpsed at its foot the pure gold which is happiness, of love shared and joys earned—together.

THE END.

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Planets of Destiny

By CAROL YOUNG

BY the application of the scientific principles of astrology your questions will be answered in these pages. But the publishers of this magazine, and also the conductor of this department, do not hold themselves responsible for the accuracy of the replies, inasmuch as many readers furnish incorrect birth data and others do not know the hour of their birth. This department is conducted only for such help or interest as readers may obtain from it.

One question is allowed each reader. Question must be accompanied by coupon to be found at the end of this department. Please do not ask questions concerning death, speculation or the whereabouts of lost property.

It is very important that you give the following data: time of birth (hour of the day or night), date, month, year and place. Also sex.

No personal questions will be answered by direct mail, but if you will send ten cents in stamps to cover cost of mailing, All-Story will be glad to return to you a short estimate of your character and of the future influences for those in your Zodiacal sign, giving suggestions for at least the next two years.

DAILY ASTROLOGICAL GUIDE

For the Next Two Weeks

September 6—The morning and afternoon are the best parts of to-day as far as average matters are concerned; don't trust social affairs in evening.

September 7—Here is a good day for resting up; but it would not be wise to follow the ideas and plans occurring to you in the evening.

September 8—Again we find the earlier hours the best of the day; settle down to the usual run of things after passing the lunch hour; don't be bold.

September 9—This is one of those days when things don't want to go right; so let 'em go wrong if they must—don't worry and don't fret.

September 10—A good social and domestic day; but uncomfortable in the money department in the A.M. if you have been extravagant recently.

September 11—Nothing much doing to-day in the line of planetary assistance; better to take it easy, saving strength, money and emotion if you can.

September 12—This is more like what we want in the way of influence from the planets; let them help you in whatever worthy work you are doing.

September 13—Depressing and generally unsatisfactory to-day; but don't allow yourself to be-

come discouraged—look ahead, planning for better days.

September 14—If you can get through the morning without trouble, all is well for the day, particularly on a day like this one; play and rest.

September 15—Not favorable day with those in authority; make sure you do not give cause for complaint; evening better than daylight hours.

September 16—Just about an average day, slightly below par in the morning and early afternoon; slightly better in the evening.

September 17—If anything important in money matters comes up in the morning, take care of it definitely, for the vibrations are good.

September 18—Again, the morning is better than the rest of the day, so don't rush around too feverishly in the afternoon and evening.

September 19—Very unreliable and untrustworthy to-day, so stick to your work; pleasant in evening in social and domestic and love affairs.

"THE HELPMEET"

Headline from the paper: "Can't Live On Love"—Mrs. H. C. F. found out that her honeymoon partner had only fifteen dollars. He asked her to pawn her jewels so they could take a wedding trip. No go. Annulment decree asked and obtained.

Looks like one of our boys has taken up gold digging, for the bride in the case was the daughter of a wealthy steel magnate. 'Tain't fair! Gold digging ought to be strictly confined to the girls. It's disgraceful when men try to get a woman to act as a meal ticket, isn't it?

Or don't you think so?

Personally, I don't think it is any worse one way or the other—it's all wrong, no matter which sex tries it. That isn't what marriage is for. If it can't be a fifty-fifty proposition, each partner acting as a partner should, they shouldn't get married.

In this particular case, I think they were both fools for not having enough confidence in each other to talk things over frankly in advance and understand just where they were at in the affair. Possibly she had been reading fairy tales and thought that of course everything would be all right if they got married. Possibly neither of them had been properly brought up by their parents to understand the responsibilities of a home. He was certainly aware of the fact he didn't have enough money; it doesn't seem possible he didn't know they would have to buy groceries. So he stands fairly convicted of figuring her money or that of her father would at least help to some extent. He was a digger. No doubt about it.

On the other hand, continuing to peruse the papers, I note a column in which a number of girls are asked the question, "If your salary equaled that of the average well paid man, would you consider matrimony as favorably as you do now?"

"No," says the first girl; "if I were making that much money I could afford to be independent." "I would not," says another. "I should say not!" "If that were the case, I'd hardly think of getting married," from still another. "Of course I would not be as ready to marry," answers a fourth. The fifth reluctantly says she thinks it a girl's duty to marry and raise a family, and that money is of secondary consideration.

Is this a typical group of modern girls?

I'd like to hear from my readers about what they think of the matter. Do you figure on getting married just to have life easier than it is for you now? Or do you want to get married so you can do your share toward making another happy American home, standing up as bravely to your share of the work as you expect your mate to stand up to his? I am here addressing the feminine portion of my audience, but that does not bar the men from writing in on this subject. I'll report back to you in a later issue of ALL-STORY the results that come in from this request. There is an astrological point behind it that I want to make.

I'll tell you this much: if you don't want to do every bit of your share, you're wrong in thinking you want to marry. If you are looking at it from the point of view of "How much can I get out of it?" you're not going to be happy in domestic life. If you have any trace of a double standard for the two sexes, either before or after marriage, there is trouble ahead for you.

My suggestion is that you talk this matter over with some one of the other sex—with a single person if you are not married—for that is one of the best ways to find out exactly what you think about the matter yourself.

Then write to me about it, giving your best arguments. Talk it over and think it over before writing; but write to me about it. The results will be most interesting and so will the inside reasons for what is right—all of which I promise to tell after I have heard from you.

MATRIMONY SERVICE

And still they come!

Keep 'em coming. I will continue this service as long as you want it. Ask me "When should I decide on marriage?" or "What would be the next favorable time for me to marry?" and I will list your initials and birthday, together with the soonest month after date of publication when it would be safe for you to make this important decision, or for you to take this important step.

The next soonest, I said. Don't argue with me if it seems too far away. I can't help what the planets indicate, and, don't forget, they are usually right.

By the way, don't be like M. L. T., who makes the mistake of writing her birthday "September 9, 1930." Here is the list for this time:

N. E. W., February 14, 1915—April, 1938.
Mrs. M. M., November 23, 1884—July, 1931.
C. D., September 15, 1911—December, 1932.
V. A. B., June 22, 1910—October, 1934.
A. P., October 20, 1908—April, 1938.
R. B., March 4, 1910—April, 1931.
Mrs. N. E. Z., December 24, 1874—August, 1932.
H. C. C., July 17, 1898—June, 1931.
M. E., September 18, 1908—August, 1933.
L. Z., September 26, 1915—December, 1937.
M. B., July 9, 1909—May, 1931.
R. L. D., March 5, 1913—December, 1934.
M. L., May 23, 1912—September, 1933.
A. M., October 18, 1913—September, 1934.
F. V. W., April 26, 1914—June, 1940.
A. G., March 5, 1908—September, 1930, or April, 1931.
L. S., November 10, 1906—September, 1930, or May, 1931.
H. P., August 19, 1912—November, 1936.
J. D. H., June 11, 1913—September, 1934.
R. F. N., October 9, 1903—November, 1933.
N. P. W., April 7, 1907—September, 1931.
J. Y., January 27, 1914—January, 1938.
K. S., September 15, 1910—December, 1932.
M. K., October 1, 1913—June, 1941.
C. W., December 5, 1911—February or March, 1940.
C. Y., November 16, 1912—February or October, 1935.
L. J., February 2, 1902—November, 1933.
M. H., May 12, 1893—December, 1932.
M. R. R., January 29, 1913—January, 1938.
E. J., February 20, 1914—December, 1937.
B. J. B., September 5, 1914—January, 1937.
Mrs. J. S., September 4, 1882—January, 1937.
M. K., April 21, 1905—August, 1932.
E. C., January 26, 1908—October, 1933.
F. T. T., November 30, 1901—December, 1936.
M. C., September 19, 1907—August, 1933.
K. C. D., August 4, 1909—September, 1931.
Mrs. E. J. LaB., November 1, 1887—November, 1934.
M. M., August 14, 1913—February or October, 1936.
M. R. E. D., May 13, 1907—December, 1932, or July, 1933.
J. J. H., September 24, 1901—September, 1933.
M. H., December 21, 1912—November, 1936.
I. R., July 2, 1913—November, 1934.
I. T. S., June 24, 1909—October, 1934.
R. D., July 6, 1896—April, 1931.
R. E. T., November 23, 1911—November, 1935.
M. M. C., Sept. 25, 1906—Sept., 1933.
E. M. A., August 27, 1902—August, 1932.
I. J. G., December 20, 1910—July, 1932.
M. L. McK., July 2, 1912—November, 1934.
E. L. M., December 24, 1907—August, 1932.
E. L., November 6, 1910—April, 1931.
E. J. C., October 13, 1913—September, 1941.
C. V. C., October 20, 1911—May, 1942.
S. B., July 5, 1909—March or April, 1931.
F. M. O'D., May 1, 1905—September, 1932.
R. L. R., March 13, 1913—February, 1935.
A. H. S., February 28, 1909—November, 1934.
G. L. W., April 1, 1914—September, 1931.
J. F. G., November 29, 1892—August, 1931.
M. S., December 21, 1910—July, 1932.
M. C., August 12, 1913—February, 1936.
M. E. A., August 31, 1911—September, 1932.
C. A. S., December 1, 1908—August, 1931.

Whoa! That's enough for this time. More in next issue. Let's give some of the others a chance at an answer.

SELECTED

Not for at least six more years with any one, H. S., born April 19, 1884. Can't tell you anything about another person when you don't give the birth data on the other, as well as your own.

No, J. L., born August 12, 1912, the combination of dates you send me would not make a happy wedded life. Don't marry that man unless you want to prove me right and don't care what happens to a couple of years of your life.

What is your husband's birthday, E. T., born October 21, 1907? You are headstrong, ambitious and are apt to think you have to rule the roost or your pride will be hurt. That doesn't make a happy and contented home. If your husband is a man of spunk, the chances are you are both to blame. You are, in part at least, blamable for conditions you don't care for.

Yes, there is a change promised you, Mrs. L. R. A., born December 17, 1906, if you are big enough to take advantage of it. Any change in your domestic affairs would be for the better, so look up and forget the past.

Married life doesn't look too good for you right now, Mrs. D. A. B., born July 6, 1908, but there is much you can do to make it tolerable. For one thing, get rid of any tendency you may

have to hark back to things you did not like in the past; and also, try to see things from your husband's point of view as much as possible. Your own point of view isn't apt to be the best one to take for about another twelve months.

Conditions surrounding you are getting better, I. M., born December 8, 1906; and you can get more of what you want than during the past three years, whether it is a home or something else you are sure you ought to have. But don't be impatient. There is danger of trying to get everything all at once and missing some of what might come your way if you were a little more willing to wait, together with working calmly.

What have you done to make this marriage a success? What makes you think it is so much the fault of your husband, Mrs. M. E. B., born October 7, 1898, that you could do better with another? Personally, I think you are lazy and want too much service from those about you. Am I wrong?

E. M. M., born September 21, 1908, is very unhappy with a certain man, and yet she has the foolish idea that she couldn't be happy without him. What should we do in a case like that? Looks as though she enjoys misery. Judging by his birthday, that's what they both would have if they let the affair go on. Everybody to his own taste. Me? I'd quit.

Sorry, but it looks to me as though it were all over, Mrs. C. G., born November 26, 1902. Funny it doesn't look that way to you, after being separated from him for three years.

No, F. B., born December 11, 1905, he would not make you a good husband. Too many secret affairs on the parts of both of you after marriage. Getting married is no good unless both husband and wife remain true to each other.

Again I must frown on a threatened union—this time between C. A., born April 21, 1900, and a man born December 1, 1901. There is a superiority complex involved in this pair somewhere. Remember: fifty-fifty or no go.

Stay away from another woman's husband, girls. And it has never hurt any one yet to obey the other nine commandments. Pay attention to this, B. K., born January 27, 1895.

THIS COUPON MUST ACCOMPANY EACH QUESTION ASKED

CAROL YOUNG
ALL-STORY MAGAZINE,
280 Broadway, New York City.

This coupon is not good after Sept. 20. One question is allowed each reader.

Date of Birth..... .... Time.....
MONTH DATE YEAR A.M. OR P.M.

Place..... Sex.....
MALE OR FEMALE

QUESTION:

.....

.....

Name.....

Street and No.....

City..... State.....

If you wish interpretation of your Zodiacal sign, inclose ten cents (see rules).

Handwriting and Happiness

By JOHN FRASER

JOHN FRASER, gifted handwriting expert, who has made a name for himself both in his native England and here in America, will analyze your handwriting. If you wish to know whether your sweetheart is the right man for you to marry, inclose samples of your own and your sweetheart's handwritings and address your letter to Mr. Fraser, care "Service for Sweethearts." If you wish his help in finding the profession for which you are best fitted, address him care "Your Career." For general reading, care "Character Analysis."

You may take advantage of one or any service, but a coupon must accompany each request for handwriting analysis. Coupon will be found at the end of this department.

Mr. Fraser bases his judgments on the scientific rules of graphology. In no case does he forecast the future or attempt to reveal the past. Scientific graphology undertakes only to reveal the inner secrets of your nature.

As many answers will be given on these pages as space permits. All other questions will be answered by mail. A stamped, addressed envelope must accompany your request for analysis.

IT seems that several of my correspondents are in real earnest about improving themselves.

Some are not quite sure whether they actually have the "weaknesses" I attribute to them or not. This is a very logical doubt to arise in any one's mind, and I hasten to elucidate it to the best of my ability.

Our so-called "weaknesses" or foibles are not all fixed habits. As a matter of fact, the majority of people have only one or two of them at the most. It is our embryonic habits that we should guard against. These tendencies toward evil may be at the moment very insignificant, but their possibilities may be far-reaching. Remember "it's the little foxes that kill the vines," and the trivial propensities in human nature that play havoc with ultimate character.

Watch your secret sins!

Graphology is capable of tracing those little seemingly unimportant tendencies as easily as the more flagrant sins that human nature is heir to. This study of handwriting might well be called the X-Ray to human character. Its revelations are really uncanny at times.

SERVICE FOR SWEETHEARTS

like to hear from you as
Lizzie
readily as I would like. Also am
Henry

(Miss Lizzie B., Long Beach, Cal.) You are a broadminded girl who likes to have plenty of elbow-room. Your outlook on life is sane and sensible, and with your education you have a much better chance of becoming an executive in some organization than of being a working man's wife, as you called yourself. You are built for bigger things than pots and pans, and domestic duties in a two-by-four apartment. It is true that this boy of yours means very much to you, and, by the way, ought to make you very happy, but on the other hand I'm afraid the halo of romance would soon become very indistinct in your young life once you were face to face with the drudgery of running a household. Before you two think of getting married, I would advise you to go carefully into the matter. I see many reasons why you should not get married, but that is neither here nor there when you have made up your minds to do so. Henry is a straightforward young man who would be frugal and careful about everything. He is no spendthrift, so you don't need to worry about him on that score. You are more likely to be the one who will send the money flying as soon as it comes into your possession. There are other characteristics in both your natures which are not compatible, and which ought to be considered before you take the final step into matrimony. You would do well to figure them out for yourselves.

Write me again, won't you?

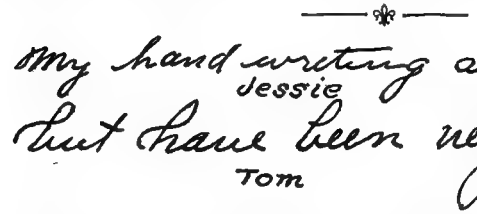
thought maybe you could give me
Sophie
am interested in getting in the
Malcolm

(Miss Sophie M., Detroit, Mich.) I observe that you have chosen a pretty level-headed fellow for a husband. Though he is no leader of men in any sense of the word, at the same time he is capable of making a girl like yourself happy. He has many good qualities, and is seemingly possessed of an abundance of common sense. You, on the other hand, are more changeable in your likes and dislikes. You are up one day and down the next. You are given to moodiness and become too pessimistic at times. I would call you fussy and old maidish in some things. You are not as open-minded as is your fiancé. You keep lots of information to yourself, even to the point of being deceitful now and then. I question very much if you are properly mated, from the fact that your natures don't blend as far as the fundamentals are concerned. Malcolm is the stronger of the two in the matter of mentality, while you have it all over him in ardor and affection. I like his honesty and straightforwardness. He has lots of business ability. If you would only change your viewpoint and interest yourself in the more worth while things of life than you are doing at present, I would not hesitate for a moment in advising you two to get married whenever you can afford it. How about it?

you would have more success
Annie
your opinion of mine and
Charles

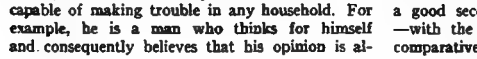
(Miss Annie F., South Bend, Ind.) With natures as different as yours and Charles's I'm afraid there will not be much chance of seeing eye to eye with each other when it comes to

the running of a household. As far as I can see your dispositions are poles apart, and under such conditions happiness and harmony are impossible. Your boy friend is a go-ahead fellow who evidently likes to have his own way. He is masterful, and cannot stand to be dictated to. He is opinionated and somewhat conceited. I grant you he is a fine type of business man who is capable of making lots of money, but like a great many more people in this world he overlooks the fact that money is not everything, by any means, and particularly where marriage is concerned. You, on the other hand, Annie, prefer to live your life in a more quiet way. A stay-at-home girl, I would call you. You are not very exuberant when it comes to affection. You would do well to consider carefully the pros and cons regarding your marriage to a man like Charles, if you are hoping for lasting matrimonial felicity.



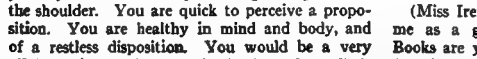
(Miss Jessie S., Peoria, Ill.) I would say that you are a well-mated couple and likely to make a real success of married life. I discover that you are both ardent in the best sense of the word. Tom is a real he-man who has high principles and a big heart. He is the type of man who loves the wide open spaces and whose playground is the world. He is a good mixer and one who can adapt himself to any company. Of course, I see in him many little foibles that are capable of making trouble in any household. For example, he is a man who thinks for himself and consequently believes that his opinion is always right. He likes to "show off" a little bit, and is apt to talk too much about his accomplishments. But—he can be very secretive and close-minded when he wants to be! His temper, though well under control, is nevertheless there and in danger of breaking out at the least expected moments. Regarding yourself, you have pretty much the same temperament as he has, only less accentuated. Your impulsiveness is the weakest characteristic in you, with your temper making a good second. I see no reason why you two —with the necessary adjustment—should not be comparatively happy when married

YOUR CAREER



(Miss Catherine J., Hartford, Conn.) It is very obvious to me that you are a person who fusses over the petty things and overlooks the more important worth while problems. You have got the courage of your convictions all right, and pride yourself in always hitting straight from the shoulder. You are quick to perceive a proposition. You are healthy in mind and body, and of a restless disposition. You would be a very efficient director in some institution where discipline is necessary. Your self-control is marvelous when face to face with a difficult situation. Your mannerisms have the flavor of a schoolma'm, even, I believe, to the elevated poise of your head. As to your faults you have several, like the rest of us. For example your "t" bars point very distinctly to the fact that you like to lord it over people when you can get away with it. You have a quick uncontrollable temper when you once get started—but, as I said before, it takes a lot to get you started.

You are of an economical turn of mind, and like full value for your money. All these negative qualities are nothing compared to your other excellent characteristics.



(Miss Irene D., Winnipeg, Man.) You impress me as a girl who has a studious disposition. Books are your companions, and research is your favorite occupation. Since you show tendencies in that particular direction, I would not hesitate for a moment in advising you to take up teaching as a profession. You are analytical in the extreme and capable of concentrating on one thing to the exclusion of everything else. You are methodical and systematic in your work. Your quiet, painstaking manner would help you in the teaching of children. Though you are not as patient as you might be, on the other hand you

have considerable self-control when it is necessary to employ it. I observe that you are good-natured and very adaptable in company. You have also the power of imparting knowledge to others in a lucid manner which is half the battle in the training of the young mind. You evidently do your own thinking, and seldom listen to the say-so of other people. In fact, I would call you opinionated in some things and rather puritanical in others. If you are not careful there may be a danger of you getting into the proverbial rut, and becoming very circumscribed in your thinking and living. Get busy and prepare yourself for the profession I have suggested. I'm sure you'll do well in it.

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

not want to waste it

(Miss Bessie M., Richmond, Va.) The size of your pen strokes reveals to me that you live physically rather than mentally. In other words, ideas are not so much to you as actions are. Your impulses are strong and your feelings are governed by your emotions. You are a girl who has the faculty of making friends readily. You are also well informed and like to keep abreast of the times. I further observe that you are discreet and would always think twice before you spoke once. I like your generosity and your liberal-mindedness, they are refreshing. In looking deeper into your nature I discover that your self-control is not so pronounced as it might be. You are apt to let yourself go and be real nasty at times. Your temper is far from being angelic, since it has a mean habit of coming to life with the slightest provocation. I'm sure you would be much happier and even more popular than you are if you had a better grip of yourself in this respect.

and I have seen your self

(Miss Beatrice H., Jamaica, N. Y.) You are evidently from the other side of the Atlantic judging by the tightness of your writing. No one could call you a spendthrift! On the contrary, you are frugal and like to have a hundred cents of value for every dollar you spend. You seem to be a kind-hearted sort of girl and straightforward in all you do. A conscientious employee to some boss, but you'll never be much of a leader in any walk of life. I'm of the opinion you are too self-conscious and bashful. You require a little more backbone and less introspection. You ought to assert yourself more and demand what's coming to you You would do well to fight those attacks of the "blues" which I see visit you quite often. You also have a habit of keeping your own counsel. The keeping of secrets is one of your strong traits. Though I could not say that you have a strong personality, at the same time you have many good qualities which are really commendable. You can be trusted, and that's more than we can say of some people.

THIS COUPON AND A STAMPED ADDRESSED ENVELOPE MUST ACCOMPANY REQUEST FOR ANALYSIS

JOHN FRASER,
ALL-STORY MAGAZINE,
280 Broadway,
New York City.

This coupon is not good after Sept. 20. A stamped addressed envelope must be inclosed when forwarding.

I enclose handwriting specimen for
—Service for Sweethearts.
—Your Career.
—Character Analysis.
(Check which you prefer. One coupon must accompany each choice.)

Name.....

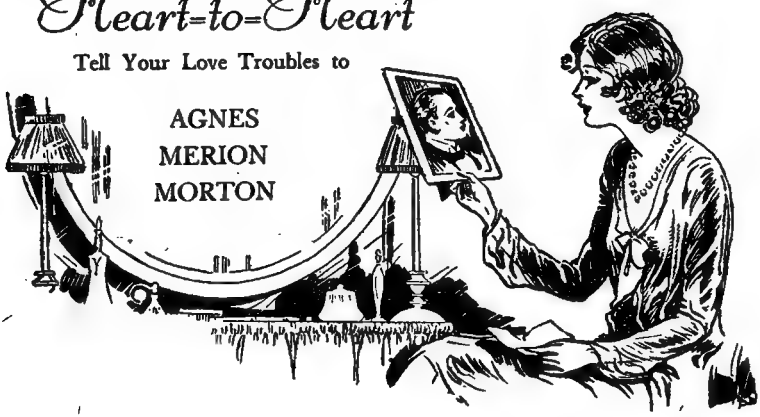
Street and No. .....

City..... State.....

Heart-to-Heart

Tell Your Love Troubles to

AGNES
MERION
MORTON



MRS. MORTON wants you to feel that she is a friend—some one to whom it is a comfort to tell your problems, who will advise and encourage you in your struggle for happiness, and who is always here to help. She is interested in you. Write to her freely, addressing your letter care All-Story Magazine, 280 Broadway, N. Y. C.

Every letter is confidential.

As Mrs. Morton receives so many letters, she cannot publish answers to all in the space allotted to her. Some, therefore, are answered by mail. Be sure to enclose a stamped, addressed envelope with your question.

I HAVE remarked before that the mail seems to run in cycles. The same problem apparently presents itself to dozens of people at the same time. For days now every other letter I opened has been from some foolish girl who imagines herself in love with a married man, usually twice her years. She does not recognize the fact that he is getting to the dangerous age—affected by the unrest of the middle years, the desire of a youth that is passing to have one last kick before giving up the ghost. She does not see that almost any sweet young thing would do as the object of his philandering attentions. No, she allows him to persuade her that she is the love of his life—beg pardon, The Love Of His Life. She flatters herself that his wife has never truly appreciated him, that until *she* came along he was lonely and misunderstood.

Let's read together just one or two of those pathetic letters; pathetic because they represent so much wasted time in a life that is too short even for worth-while things; so much affection misplaced and thrown away in a world where even the deserving get too little love.

DEAR MRS. MORTON:

I am writing you for advice and I know you will give me the best you have. I am a girl of twenty-one, in love with a man forty-one. But he is married, has two children nineteen and seventeen. I have been keeping steady company with him for six months and I want to say I didn't think any one could love a man as I love him. I simply worship the ground he walks on. I knew when I first went with him that he was married, but it didn't make any difference. It just seems as if I couldn't keep myself from seeing him. His own home life (may I state?) is not a happy one. He says he loves me, and if I will only keep on with him that some day he will be mine, for his wife says she is going to divorce him. She knows there is some one else, but has no idea who it is, although she knows me when she sees me. She has never suspected me in the least. I know I am not breaking up a home because he was going with more than one girl before myself; and I know

that I am absolutely the only one now. He gave me a beautiful radio for my birthday; also a set of jewelry for each of my different costumes. He takes me to nice places and is not ashamed to be seen in public. A lot of people that know his wife know that he loves me, for they told me he told them so. I don't know what to do. I think sometimes I should not see him, but it seems when it really comes right down to it I can't. I love him. He is very jealous.

I was ill in bed a few weeks ago and he spent two nights sitting up with me. He never left me and had some one to take care of me. He has told me if it were not for the children he would not put up with what he does. He has asked if I would be happy married to him, and I know I would. He has a good business near where I live, and never has failed calling me for one day in six months, sometimes twice daily. I know if it were not true love on either one of our parts we would not have continued this long. He sees me every other day, sometimes every day. We also go places week-ends. Sometimes he's gone for three or four days, but let me tell you he is at all times a gentleman. Please tell me what to do; when I go to tell him he breaks to pieces and begs me not to quit. Says his children and myself are his only happiness. And I'll admit his stolen time with me is all my happiness, all I look forward to from day to day.

Oh, Mrs. Morton, please don't keep me waiting too long. I'm so anxious. This is the first time I have ever written to any one for advice. Don't think he neglects his own for me. He does not. They have everything they could wish for and he worships his children—adores them. His wife and children used to come in a place where I was working. I love his children, too, but my blood would run cold when she came in. I couldn't do my work at all.

QUEENS BABY.

Since you have written me in good faith, I want to answer you in the same attitude and tell you exactly what I think and what experience and observation have shown me Generally speaking, a married man's attentions are no compliment to any girl. You admit that you are not the first woman this man has been with. He is undoubtedly of the philandering type and in the end he would be as untrue to you as he is now being to his wife. Such men cannot help it perhaps—they are born that way—but the fact that they cannot help it is no consolation to the women who care for them. While you are going with him you are losing an opportunity of fixing your affections on some one who would be suitable, and winning the love of some one who has the right to love you, because free. You are also risking your priceless reputation—something you can never get back when it is lost—for the sake of a clandestine affair that will sooner or later die of its own furtiveness. It cannot fail to do so. I have seen it too many times not to know what I am talking about.

This man has two children almost as old as you. If it came to a divorce between him and his wife, he would lose those children whom he "loves so much" (although he cannot behave himself in such a way as to make them proud of such a father if he is found out). He would inevitably blame you for losing them to him and for any scandal in which he might become involved through this affair with you, no matter how much more to blame he was than you were for such affair.

Break with him. Break with him at once. If he is too weak to pull up, to stop acting in this dishonorable and disloyal way, it certainly should open your eyes to his true character. No man who really loves a girl will conduct himself in such a way as to blacken her in the eyes of her friends and acquaintances. But it is not really love for you, but for himself. He is double crossing you as well as his wife and really in a worse way, because when the storm breaks you—not she—will be blamed. Her position is assured, but you have not any. You are the outsider, the intruder, the interloper, and it is nonsense to say you are not breaking up a home because, whatever it may be underneath, it now has the outward semblance of a home and it is at least a place where this man and this woman can live together and keep the children they have brought into the world and made themselves responsible for. Try to put yourself in the other woman's place. Try to think how you will feel if, when you are as old as she is, some little chit comes between you and your husband. It is not worth while to hurt any woman, Baby, especially for the sake of a man who is as selfish and as inconsiderate as this one. His trouble is that he wants to eat his cake and have it, too. He has not the backbone to give up either one of you and what you mean to him for the sake of the other. No, he wants you both.

No matter how hard it may be to let him go, it won't be so hard as persisting in these meetings because eventually you will be found out—it cannot be avoided—and you will lose the respect of every one who knows you. I am afraid you will find that is too high a price to pay for such stolen sweets as you imagine you have.

Perhaps a letter from another girl who is doing more or less what you are doing, will open your eyes better than I can. "Oh, yes," you will say, "but that is different. My case isn't like the others."

How is it different, Baby? *In what essential way does it differ?*

DEAR MRS. MORTON:

I have been reading the advice you give to the girls and I think it is splendid, so help me with my troubles. Would it shock you if I told you that I'm just lovesick over a married man? It happened like this: he is a chiropractor, a man forty-three years old, handsome as can be, and has appealing ways that make me love him all

the more. But the worst of all is he is married, so that's what makes it hard for both of us. They have four children; two died. Although I'm only a girl twenty years old, I know it's wrong for me to think of loving him, being he has a wife and four children. He said if he wasn't married he would want me for his wife. I had a bad fall some time ago and began taking treatments from him. The first three trips at his office he was very friendly—in fact, he hardly knew me, but he knew dad. It was the fourth trip at his office when he, I guess, meant business. He told me he loved me. He pulled me to him and kissed me time and again. You might know how wrong I felt having the lips of a married man to mine, but ever since then he has done the same. He said he doesn't know what he will do after I quit taking adjustments. I told him looks like I'm making a fool of myself. He said he thought he was, too. He told me of ways he didn't like his wife; the ways which I possess. Of course I know he is untrue to his wife, and I am sorry for her. I could not stand to have a man I loved honey over other girls. Not that I'd be jealous. But it isn't true, as I call it. If this married man was divorced I believe I could love him to be his wife, even though he would be untrue. I've been with a lot of nice boys, but this man appeals more for love than any of the single ones. I told him: "I suppose other women that come for adjustments you pet them like me also." He said you're the only one. He said that's the fact. I told him I would marry him in a minute if he wasn't married. Every time I left his office after he started to kiss me, he would kiss me good-by; that is, if there wasn't others in the office, of course. I made him promise to keep this a secret from every one, and I promised him that I would also—that is, from our acquaintances.

I forgot to say that this married man was telling me one day when I was there that his wife got peeved at him one night. He said I was wishing you were here. (He meant at his home.) From the way he talks his wife raves about everything—has a terrible temper. He told me lots about himself and also of his wife, things he did before he was married. Well, take a good laugh after you read this tangled-up affair, but write my advice soon please. I will be watching the mail box close. The more you write the better I like it. Please don't say I need a spanking for such nonsense as I know I do, for I feel simple after my first experience loving a married man.

He doesn't drink, smoke, chew tobacco—has no bad habits. Who could help loving a man like that? But of course I can't, I know that. I work hard to keep myself and my mother. I'll look for an answer from you soon.

Your letter makes me feel more like crying than laughing. I am not "shocked," but it does seem rather despicable for a man so much older than yourself to make up to you as this chiropractor has been doing, when he has a wife who has borne him six children. The attentions of a man like that are nothing for any girl to be proud of; you know this as well as I do. He is more to blame than you because in such a tangle the married one is almost always more to blame. Still, you are not free from fault yourself, for it is not wise nor discreet, nor even sensible, to encourage such actions on the part of a married man. If you will listen to me you will never go near his office again. Get another doctor or do without "adjustments." It may seem harsh to say it, but it sounds very much as if the man's morals need adjusting.

DEAR MRS. MORTON:

I am a reader of ALL-STORY, but until recently I have not given your Heart-To-Heart articles much attention. I read the letters and answers and I now feel positive that you can help me. I am sixteen and very dark-skinned, dark-haired and dark-eyed, and so have the nickname of Brownie. But of course this isn't what I intended telling you. For about a year I have been running around with a gang of fellows and girls, some my age, but most of them about two years older. About twice a week we have a little party and get drunk or so close to it that one can't tell the difference. We have the reputation of being the wildest crowd in town. Nothing to brag about, I'm sure. If we are the wildest I don't know; but anyway it isn't getting me very far. Wherever I go it's Brownie this and that, and the remarks are not nice ones.

My boy friend is forever telling me about my actions. My two best girl friends have threatened to break friendship if I continue with this crowd. What am I to do? Shall I get a position out of town? Or what shall I do? I want to stick by Don and, above all, I don't want to give up my two girl friends. I have tried before to give up the gang, but they only come back after me and I don't seem to resist. My friends think I am a weakling—maybe you do, too. Please write to me and tell me what to do. It seems so many write to you that you must help them and I feel you can also help me. I am waiting anxiously for your advice.

BROWNIE.

The solving of your problem depends almost entirely upon yourself. I can tell you what I think you ought to do, but unless you make up your own mind to do it I might as well talk to the wind. You know in your own heart what is right and what isn't; who is worth while and who isn't. You don't need any one to tell you, for you tell us in your own words in your letter. You have two good girl friends and a boy friend who sounds like the right sort. They respect you and want the best for you. Then why can't you fill your time with engagements with them to such an extent that when the "wild gang" come around all you have to say is that you're dated up? If the house is full, Brownie, no one else can get in.

Get a job to fill your idle hands, and then give your leisure hours to those who truly care for you. Those others are just playing you for a fool; don't you see what they really think of

you, when they talk about you like that? And no matter how much "fun" you may think you are having you'll wake up some day and realize that you have thrown away the most precious thing a girl possesses—her reputation. Things like that don't stop—they get worse and worse, go farther and farther all the time. You can never calculate what you'll do when you've had too much to drink—and the morning after is a bitter thing to face sometimes.

You sound like a girl with the right instincts, and certainly you must have a lot of good points to be able to attract and hold the good friends you have. Then why not listen to them? Make up your own mind that you are going to snap out of this, and you'll win through yet. It isn't clever, nor cute, Brownie, to act as you describe. It doesn't take any intelligence nor sense. It takes both to stick to what you know is right, and in the end you will be far better and happier, so you'll be rewarded. But if you continue on the wrong path you will be punished in one way or another, sooner or later. That's not preaching—it's just plain hard fact.

If you left town you'd only meet the same problem again, and you might be very lonely in a new place, so foolish and indiscreet things might be all you had a chance to do. You do not have the excuse of loneliness now, for there are those who will keep you from being lonely without the "gang" if you will only let them.

DEAR MRS. MORTON:

I am a reader of ALL-STORY and have read some of your answers to others who are in trouble; I wondered if you would help me, too. I am twenty-one years old and I don't mean to flatter myself, but I am not of the flapperish sort. I don't care for necking or parking in automobiles with every boy I date. I have had quite a few boys call on me.

There is a young man (I guess I should say although he is at least past thirty-five years old) I see every day, for he works right across the street from me and recently I have been seeing him almost every night. I might say I have learned to like him lots. It seems I never enjoy myself unless I am out with him. He has a different circle of friends. He never travels around with the boys I know. I thought it's because they are so much younger. This man has never been married and before I started seeing him so often, he would make remarks flattering himself because he had never married.

Now since I have been going with him he has shown me in different ways that he likes me, but he has not told me. Do you think I should drop my other boy friends and save my time and try to make myself more interesting for him? Really, since I've been going with him the other boys appear to be so silly and I always enjoy myself when I'm with him.

Do you think our ages are too far apart? Is he too old for me to companion with? I have heard some remarks along that line, and my people think it funny that I want to go out with him. Also some of his men friends, while they are married, they think he shouldn't be going out with girls and kid him lots.

If you were me and if you learned to love him and he loved you is there any reason we should not marry? I will be waiting your reply through ALL-STORY and thanks for helping me along.

JUST ANOTHER FRIEND IN NEED.

There is no reason why, if you learn to love this man and he loves you; if you find out that you are really pals—for no marriage can be a real success unless the man and woman are pals—you should not marry him. But there is every reason why you should not give up all your young companions now and just sit and wait for him to declare himself. Methods so obvious never won any man.

My dear, you are fighting an age-old battle. Love ties a woman's hands and tongue, and in that battle she needs both. Moreover, you are fighting it with an old hand at the game—a dyed-in-the-wool bachelor who has doubtless been angled for until he has an exaggerated idea of his own importance, and who, I infer, has been in the habit of saying "smart" things about women and matrimony, and considering himself mighty clever to have escaped. The only way to fix the affections of a man like that (since you think they are worth fixing—I don't; such men never make good "pals") is not to let him know he can have you. Go out with others as often as you get a chance; never let him see that you are ready to fall into his arms, for it's the last way in the world to make him want to have you there.

Unfortunately, loving a man takes from a woman her greatest charm—her mystery. Her affection overflows; she wants to confide everything to the object of that affection, and to demonstrate it to him at every opportunity. She surfeits him with sweets. That is why the cold woman gets along better in the game—or battle—of love. She is chary of her favors; instead of feeding her lover with luscious chocolate creams at all times and places, she occasionally hands out a sugar-coated pill, just enough to tease him along and make him want more. She is stingy with her kisses; he never gets all he wants, and is never quite sure just how much they mean to her. That makes her all the more interesting.

In an affair with this old hand, you will have to be doubly wary. He no doubt is the type that imagines he can have any woman in the world by holding up his finger. Show him he can't. No matter how much more he means to you than other men do, don't ever let him get an inkling of it. Have all the good times you can with the others; you would only make yourself less interesting—not more—to him by "saving all your time" for him. So far from giving him every evening he asks for, I'd make him wait once in a while—it won't hurt him. It

will do him good. The best thing that could happen to that man would be to fall in love with a woman who wouldn't look at him. But the catch with the type is that they can't love—really *love*—anybody but themselves.

DEAR MRS. MORTON:

I have been married and have separated from my husband. My husband and I were happy for two years; after that he threw his job up, and I had to do the working for two and a half years. I had two babies and lost them. I got so discouraged that I came home to my mother. I have found another who is just like a brother to me. I was in the hospital for ten weeks and he never missed a day coming to see me, always bringing me something. Mother and dad think I ought to get a divorce and marry this one. Do you? He has a father and sister to support on the other side. I do not know whether to venture into it or not, for I had such luck with my first. Please advise me if you can. FOOLED ONCE.

Since you care nothing for your husband any more and any sort of life with him is apparently impossible to you, I think it would be better to get a divorce and be free. As for the second man he sounds all that is desirable, but you should not marry him without caring for him. I think you need not be afraid, however, that just because you have been unhappy once, you need be unhappy in the second marriage. As a matter of fact, your experience should help you to be a better judge of men. Next time you will know what you are doing.

DEAR MRS. MORTON:

I have a few things to tell you. I was married when I was sixteen years of age. I have been married two years. My husband has started to drink and he treats me awful sometimes; still other times we are as happy as any two can be. Please tell me how to make him quit, for I love him with all my heart—better than life, for we have been parted. We are living together now—I know what life was without him. Please advise me, for I am just HEARTBROKEN.

If you could write a little more fully I could judge the case better, but on general principles it seems to me that the only thing for you to do is to leave your husband and tell him you will come back when and only when he has pulled himself together. It is a thankless task to marry a man to reform him. If he won't straighten up for the sake of his own self-respect, there is little hope. Still, I think it is worth trying. It will require patience and self-control on your part and an absolutely unshakable determination not to give in until he has proved to you that he can be a man. It is probable that he is very young and has not had his fling yet, so you are suffering for it.

Did you read Lessie's letter in a recent issue? You are going through somewhat the same experience that she had, and I only hope that it will end as happily. You will have to make up your own mind, however, to deal with the situation as courageously and firmly as possible. I cannot make it up for you. Write again if it will help at all.

Hopelessly in Love—Cheer up! Sixteen is too young to take yourself so seriously. And *no girl's* entire happiness is bound up in one callow boy.

Mamie of Worcester—Why do you pay so much attention to what "Aunt Tabby" says? I'm afraid she's well named. The young man has atoned over and over for his one slip. I am proud of you for continuing to love him, and regret only that you are afraid to prove your love by announcing your engagement. If you deserted him now your whole life might be so soured and embittered that you would become another "Aunt Tabby" in time. Marry him, Mamie, bury the past, and God bless you both.

Burton Hale—Why not wake up and see what is going on in the world? This is the Year of Our Lord 1930—not 1846, nor yet the Stone Age.

Lonesome Ann—I think your "love" is the product of your "lonesomeness"—nothing more. Try to get a job or a hobby that will bring you into contact with other people, and you will get over this in time. A man who will betray his wife for your sake will sooner or later betray you for some one else's.

Rose C.—Your letter in your self-addressed envelope has been returned to me unclaimed. Do let me have your correct address—I am very anxious about you.

C. M. W.—Certainly you should do what the doctor says. You can never get well unless you spend most of your time for the next few months resting. Getting married or going to work shouldn't enter into the problem at all. It is the business of your life to regain your health. You can do it with patience and determination, but in no other way.

Seventeen is very young to think about getting married in any case. Even if you were a strong, husky girl and were settled in your affections, I'd say, "Wait," but since you cannot make up your mind which of the boys you like better, certainly you shouldn't think of tying yourself to either one of them even if all conditions were favorable. However, it is very childish "not to speak" when you pass your former fiancé in the street. I wish you would let me write you personally, because it would be much more satisfactory to both of us.

Jessie of Cleveland—It was a very inadequate reason to turn down your friend "because he had another fellow with him." The more the merrier, you know, and perhaps he had been telling

his pal all about you and wanted him to meet you, so no wonder he feels sore. All you can do now is to be friendly with him when you meet by chance and, if your mother will allow it, ask him to a little party some evening Any kind of party except a sit-at-home for two. If he cares to make up he will come; if he does not come, you will have to take this experience as a lesson and know better than to treat the next one in the same manner.

Dot from River Rouge—You are too young to be in love. The very fact that you can say so blithely, "I am in love with two boys," proves that you don't know what love means. Be glad they are "only friends;" get all the "only friends" you can, and leave the serious things of life until you are of an age to understand them.

Molly-oh—It is rather difficult to be so sure you care for a person of whom you have seen as little as this boy. You probably have an ideal of what he is that exists nowhere except in your imagination. What do you know of the real Henry—his thoughts and feelings and ambitions, his likes and dislikes and whether they are congenial with yours? All you know about him is the shape of his nose and the way his hair grows—attractive features, no doubt, but nothing on which to build a deathless passion. However, if you think you have a good excuse for writing to him now that he has gone away, send him a cool, friendly little letter and wait to see if he will answer it. But don't encourage yourself to think you are in love, and don't put anything into the letter that you will regret if he ignores it.

Reader's Choice Coupon

Help the editors select just the kind of story you like best by telling them which story in this issue appealed most to you.

This coupon and four others from previous or future issues will enable you to obtain free an original illustration in this issue. Just inclose five coupons in your letter and a drawing will be forwarded to you.

THE EDITORS,
ALL-STORY MAGAZINE,
280 Broadway, New York City.

Here is my opinion of the stories in this issue:

Love or a Throne.....

Jilted .....

Detour to Paradise.....

Cherry .....

Midnight of Dreams.....

A Foursome in Hearts.....

Lady Golden Heart.....

Love Comes Whistling.....

Kisses .....

My favorite authors are .....

Name .....

Address .....

(Name and address may be omitted, if desired)

The Lonesome Club

Conducted by DOROTHEA DALE

MAKE friends! Join the Lonesome Club and soon you will be getting more letters than any one you know.

Here's how to do it: if you wish your letter published in these pages write to Mrs. Dale, care of ALL-STORY, *280 Broadway, New York City, and describe yourself. Try to make it as interesting as possible—tell little things about yourself that will make others want to write to you.*

If you wish to communicate with the pals whose letters appear here, inclose your letter in a plain, stamped envelope and send it to Mrs. Dale. No letters will be forwarded without the extra stamp.

If you are a girl, you may write to other girls; if a man, to other men.

Please do not ask for the address of any one.

DEAR MRS. DALE:

I am a young married woman of twenty-three, fond of music, dancing, movies and writing letters. I am not a flapper, but neither am I old-fashioned. Letters from everywhere and every one will be welcome. A souvenir to the first one who writes. ROMOLA.

I like your club. It helps folks to get acquainted. I'm just a lonesome Iowa girl, eighteen, dark brown wavy hair, five feet five inches tall, and weigh one hundred and thirty pounds. I love all kinds of sports and I sure can dance. I would like letters from every one, young and old, rich and poor. JUST PEGGY.

It would be my delight to receive lots and lots of letters from everywhere. I am a senior in high school, four feet eleven, weigh one hundred and five, blond wavy hair and blue eyes, and I'm eighteen years old. I love sports of all kinds —swimming, hiking, fishing, and dancing above all. Would gladly exchange snapshots.

LONESOME TRIXIE, MISSOURI.

I live in Paris, but I was born in Japan and feel homesick often. I know Americans don't care for the Japanese, but perhaps some of the chums will write. I am twenty-seven years old, French by my father and Japanese by my mother. I have dark hair and green eyes, not bad-looking. I weigh one hundred and eighteen pounds and am of medium height. I like outdoor life, sports such as tennis, horse-riding, and swimming. I was born in the land of the Rising Sun for which I long and to which I shall go back one day. I went through the earthquake in 1923, where my home was destroyed with the whole town of Yokohama. I feel lonesome.

YONE.

I am a young woman twenty-four years of age, weigh one hundred and eighteen, am five feet four and have light brown hair, dark brown eyes and fair skin. I am very sociable, like making new friends and usually keep them. I like reading, dancing, skating, hiking, music, camping, hockey, and cricket matches, and as a hobby I do quite a lot of landscape painting. I am only an amateur, but have received very encouraging comment on my work. Some day I hope I will realize my ambition. Won't you find me some pen pals interested in the same things? Get busy, fellow members, and use up some of your stationery. Don't let it go to waste in your desks! Get ambitious and write to

SMILES OF CANADA.

I am a girl of fifteen, blond hair, blue eyes, and a fair complexion. I love all sports, espe-

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cially dancing. I have lots of friends, but want lots more. Am I what you would call piggish?

BLONDY OF COLORADO.

I have been reading ALL-STORY ever since I saw it and really do enjoy it. This is the way I look: brunette, wavy hair, brown eyes and an oval-shaped face, good complexion and beautiful straight white teeth, five feet one-half inch tall, and weigh one hundred and two, age sixteen. I love parties and sports and love dancing and music especially. I live in the city. I am just crazy to write to a friend.

BOBBIE.

I am just a lonesome Marine, five and one-half feet tall, brown eyes and brown hair, with a ruddy complexion. I weigh one hundred and fifty pounds; but I am not big, just well built and heavy. I am not good-looking, but as the saying goes "I can pass in a crowd." I am just twenty-one. Won't some one write to me? I have been around a good part of this world and can tell a few interesting stories. I love all sports; but auto racing is my hobby. The faster they come the better I love them.

A LONESOME LEATHERNECK.

I wonder if I, too, could have some pen pals? I'm a girl who is really lonesome, eighteen years old, blue-black hair and black eyes. I am full of fun and wise-cracks. I can write interesting letters and am willing to write all about Chicago to any one who would care to have me do so. Would like to hear from girls all over the country, especially from the West. So, come, pen pal, write to a

CHICAGOAN.

I am a lonely gal of sixteen, blue eyes and brown hair. I can flash as pretty a smile as anybody ever saw. I am a lover of all sports. I am considered good-looking by young and old. I will exchange snapshots. Come on! Make a lonely girl happy.

SUNSHINE OF W. VA. HILLS.

I live in sunny Australia, am sixteen and one-half years old with fair hair and complexion and blue eyes, and am five feet four inches high, weighing one hundred and twenty-two pounds. I am not the least bit lonely, but still I would like to have correspondents all over the world. I live on the sea coast and many and great are the times we have in the water, swimming and surfing. I love the water. Thanking you for the pen friends I hope to get,

AUSSIE.

I am a young married woman of twenty-three, have fair hair and light eyes and am five feet tall. I have one little boy. I like all sports. Some one please write.

LONESOME DOROTHY.

I have one pal, but want more—enough so that I won't have to think of anything else but writing happy and funny letters to wonderful pen pals. I am five feet five inches tall, weigh one hundred and fifteen pounds, have light brown hair and blue eyes. Love all sports but golf, and I don't know why I don't like it, but I don't. I am seventeen years old.

KITTY OF MASS.

I am a girl of sixteen, have dark blond curly hair and blue eyes, weigh one hundred pounds, and am considered good-looking. I am a senior at high school and now go to summer school to make up my work for having been away a year in Europe. Love all sports, especially dancing and swimming, and am nicknamed

SWEETIE.

Who am I? Wouldn't it be a great idea to write and find out? I have light curly hair and brown eyes. I'm crazy about the movies and wild about swimming. I'm full of pep. I want what I want, and what I want is to hear from every one. So come on, everybody, and write to

CURLY OF MAINE.

I long to correspond with one who would exchange views from a different angle to myself. I am twenty-four years of age, brown hair, blue eyes, about five feet six inches in height, considered humorous, love reading, music and dancing. What fun it will be on mail days, looking for letters and speculating on the contents.

JOY, SOUTH AFRICA.

I am almost fifteen years old, five feet three, light hair and gray eyes. I weigh one hundred and fifteen pounds. I love to swim, go on hikes and picnics and parties. I also love to play all kinds of ball. I would like to write to some one in some foreign country. Hurry up, girls, and write to me.

EUNICE OF MOBILE.

I am a boy of seventeen, have dark brown hair, brown eyes, and am seven feet four. I work in an office as clerk and do side jobs in my spare time. I am very lonely for some pen pals to write to.

ARTHUR FROM MASPETH.

We are two boys, both tall and fair, and love all kinds of sport; we are dab hands at horse riding. I, Norman, am a farmer, and my pal, Leo, is an electrician on a gold mine. Both are situated about thirty miles out of "Johannesburg City."

NORMAN AND LEO OF SUNNY S. AFRICA.

I am an orphan of nineteen, reddish hair and black eyes. I am well built, fairly well educated and appreciate the finer things of life. I always look at the bright side of life, and try to make the most of everything. I enjoy golf, swimming, dancing, and social functions of all sorts. If I could find an agreeable pen pal, I would be very grateful. Of course I won't limit myself to one, I shall write to them all.

BARBARA OF N. Y.

I am a farm girl and proud of it. I have dark brown curly hair and dark brown eyes.

I am a junior in high school, and as for my age, I will let you guess that. I love all kinds of sports. Come on, girls, let's exchange snapshots and letters and get acquainted. Also, I want to give our small-town postmaster a job—let us surprise him.

DOROTHY OF KANSAS.

Hello, folks! I crave pen pals. Won't you help me? I am a girl seventeen years old, with black wavy hair, dark brown eyes, and have a dark complexion. I'm always ready for all sorts of fun and adventures. I love sports, especially the water. My friends call me

SPIT DEVIL.

I am fourteen, blond, rather quiet, not pretty, but looking for pen pals. Here's a little secret, just for you and me and the Lonesome Club—I have three Japanese pen pals—got them from an aunt in Japan—and if some girls write to me and want to correspond with these girls, who read and write English, I'll give them their addresses. This may make me more attractive as a pen pal. GRACE OF OAK PARK.

I am a girl sixteen, dark blond curly hair, gray-blue eyes, and a fair complexion. I am a lover of music and sports. Will some of you please write to me? I will exchange snapshots.

LONELY IN WESTERN KANSAS.

I am from Missouri, am five feet tall and weigh one hundred and fifteen pounds. I have black curly hair, brown eyes, and dark complexion. I am fifteen years old. I love all sorts of sports, such as tennis, swimming, and football. I would like to hear from pals between fifteen and eighteen, and I will answer all with hot, snappy letters. BUD.

I am a girl of fifteen, have light blue eyes and my hair is sort of a henna color. I like basket ball and tennis, but my favorite hobby is the movies. Would like to hear from anybody from the ages of thirteen to seventeen.

LONESOME JUNE OF CAL.

I am a Canadian girl of sixteen, with a mixture of brown and gold hair and blue eyes. I am five feet three, fairly good-looking. I would like to hear from girls around fifteen and sixteen years of age, and also from others who would care to write. I am not lonesome, but would like to share my fun.

ANNA, ONTARIO.

I am one of these small blondes from the Sunny South. I live on a farm and it is sometimes very lonely for me, so I want lots of people to write to me. I am fifteen years old and a junior in high school. Reading, swimming, dancing, playing cards, and riding—anything available—are my hobbies.

BETTY OF S. C.

I am a young man in the twenties. I am somewhat lonesome at times. I am an ash blond and have blue eyes. I would like to hear from everybody, and will exchange snapshots.

BUDDY OF N. H.

I live in a small town on the Dakota Prairies, and quite lonesome, so would like to have a great many pen pals. I would like to have some girls of the Eastern and Southern States write to me, but would also enjoy letters from the Western States. I am seventeen years old, weigh one hundred and four pounds, five feet two, brown eyes, and medium complexion. I would also enjoy hearing from some one from the Hawaiian Islands or Philippines.

BEE OF DAK. PRAIRIES.

The grand old West is a glorious place, and we love it. But there are times when a man of the open is seized by a bitter loneliness, and though he may not care to admit it he is craving companionship. And one of these spells is the cause of this letter. Age, 26; altitude, five feet ten and one-half inches; gross tonnage one hundred and sixty-five; eyes, brown, and hair ditto, sun-tanned, and would rather laugh than eat; that's saying a lot, because I love to eat. Also, write Western poetry, articles and stories, and would like to hear from others interested in writing. Our property consists of six hundred acres in California and Nevada, where we run cattle and sheep. If you are interested in the West or this Western letter, send that letter now.

NEVADA.

I am not very good-looking, neither am I homely. I have black hair and wear it in a boyish bob, have blue-gray eyes, am about five feet five, weigh one hundred and forty, and work in a restaurant nine hours a day, but as my work is not hard, I have plenty of time to write letters. JUST A TAR HEEL.

I am Canadian-French, twenty years old, light brown hair and blue eyes. I am five feet two, fond of sports and dancing, also of music, and I play the piano. I live in the Eastern part of the U. S. and would like to have pen pals all over the world. I will answer all letters received, exchange snapshots and send some views of my home town. My letters will sure be interesting. Won't you please write? FRENCH ROSE.

I am a graduate nurse by profession, but about a year ago I was married to the best man in the world, and came to a strange city to live. I have not become acquainted with very many people out here, for I am too busy to visit, but I have plenty of time to indulge in my favorite hobby, and that is writing letters. I am brunette, with black hair and blacker eyes, height five feet three, weight one hundred and fifty-nine pounds. If you want to know how old I am, you will have to write to me and find out. I have traveled very extensively through all parts of the U. S. A. and have also been to several places in Mexico.

A. HAPPY WIFE.

I am a girl of sixteen, with brown curly hair and blue eyes. I am five feet four, and weigh one hundred and ten pounds. I like all kinds

of sports, books, and dancing. I love writing letters, and here's hoping there's a lot to answer.

MADELINE OF CANADA.

We are two young boys in our late teens, and are looking for some pen pals. We like 'em snappy and full of fun. We are fond of dancing, swimming, and horseback riding. Dick is a brunette and has brown wavy hair, and I, Don, have curly blond hair. Please write to us, because we sure want a lot of snappy pen pals.

DICK AND DON OF WASHINGTON.

Would you please put my request in your magazine for pen pals from everywhere. I am twenty-six years of age, six feet tall, with brown eyes and dark hair. I love hiking, fishing, music, reading, and writing.

J. B. PENLAND.

I'm five feet three, have brown wavy hair and big, dark brown eyes. I just love to write letters. Oh, yes, I'm a lassie of eighteen summers. I like to read, draw—in fact, I like to do most everything. I'm very lively and I want a true blue pal, because I will promise to be true blue myself. I don't like fickle people. I'd like especially to write to cow-girls, or any Western girl, as I adore the West. Now, girls, because I said that don't drop out if you're not a cow-girl, please; everybody write to me and I'll sure keep the mailman busy.

MARY OLIVER WOOD.

I am twenty, but will soon pass another milestone. I am five feet four, with brown hair and gray eyes, and a huge smile for every one I like, and I sometimes smile at people I don't like. I love to dance and am always ready for a big time. I have lots of friends in my home town and can easily make pals, but I would like to correspond with a pen pal. I work in an office and have lots of spare time to write. I prefer blondes, but brunettes are very acceptable. Any one near my age, please, please write.

JUST SOMEBODY'S STENOG.

I would like a few friendly pals of the Middle West. I am alone and long for companionship. I am a widow forty years young. I have had a lot of enjoyment in my life, but lost my only child a few months ago, and I am feeling the loss keenly.

C. J. J.

I wonder if you'd let a lonely little girl join your club. I'm not lonely in every sense of the word, except that I love to write letters, and unless you come to my rescue I won't have any one to write to. I am five feet six, have blond hair, blue-green eyes, a sort of babyish face and am slim. I don't look half bad in a bathing suit. I am a senior in high school, and am seventeen. I want all the girls who go places and do things, between the ages of seventeen and nineteen, to write to me and tell me all about everything. C'mon, everybody, write to

BLONDEE FROM N. Y.

I am twenty-nine, five feet five, dark complexion, black hair and brown eyes. I want to hear from as many as want to write, so come on, folks, write to lonesome me.

EARLE.

I am just an old fun-loving boy raring to hear from any and everybody who is hunting for a good pen pal. If any one writes me, I sure will answer and tell of the Southern States. I am twenty years of age, have sandy hair, blue eyes, about five feet ten, weigh one hundred and fifty-five pounds. Come on now, give me a good "shower" of letters, which I will appreciate. I am fond of all sports.

LONESOME PINE.

I'd like to hear from anybody and everybody. I am a blonde with blue eyes, five feet four, weigh one hundred and twenty-three. I am a lover of all sports, especially swimming, tennis, and basket ball. I am a junior at high school.

KENTUCKY KIDDIE.

I am fifteen years of age, about five feet three, have dark brown eyes and hair. I am a junior at high, and enjoy outdoor sports, especially swimming. Would like to hear from folks my age throughout the Union. I will answer all letters and exchange photos.

MILLY FROM MAINE.

I am a young man, twenty-five years old, five feet ten, weigh one hundred and fifty pounds, who would like to correspond with people in out-of-the-way places.

BOB OF NEW YORK CITY.

We live in Adelaide, South Australia, where we have many friends, and we would like very much to have some pen pals in America. Shirley is short and dark and is just seventeen. Esme is tall and fair and is nearly sixteen. Won't some one please write to us? We would like some one who has not left college or high school yet, as we are still attending college. We are willing to write any one, and will write often and also exchange photos and other interesting things. We are fond of outdoor sports, especially tennis, and we are also interested in talkie films.

SHIRL AND ES.

I'd like to have a few pen correspondents. I lived all of my married life in the tropical countries. My husband was an engineer, "mining," and his business covered a lot of territory. He died in Panama some years ago. Since then I have lived in Boise, Idaho. Though a native of Virginia I was connected with a private boarding school in Idaho for quite a few years as a domestic science teacher. I am now affiliated with a sorority in Berkeley, California. I have traveled extensively—West India, Central and Southern America, China, Japan, India, England, Java, and parts of Europe. I am a very busy woman, with very little spare time; seldom go anywhere, even though I live in a large city. I have few acquaintances, as my friends all live in Idaho. I would love to have some pen pals near my own age—forty-eight.

J. R. H.